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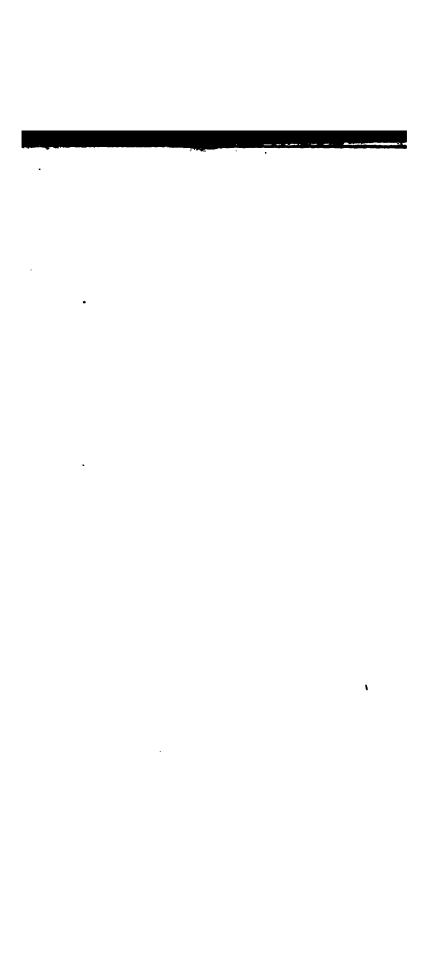
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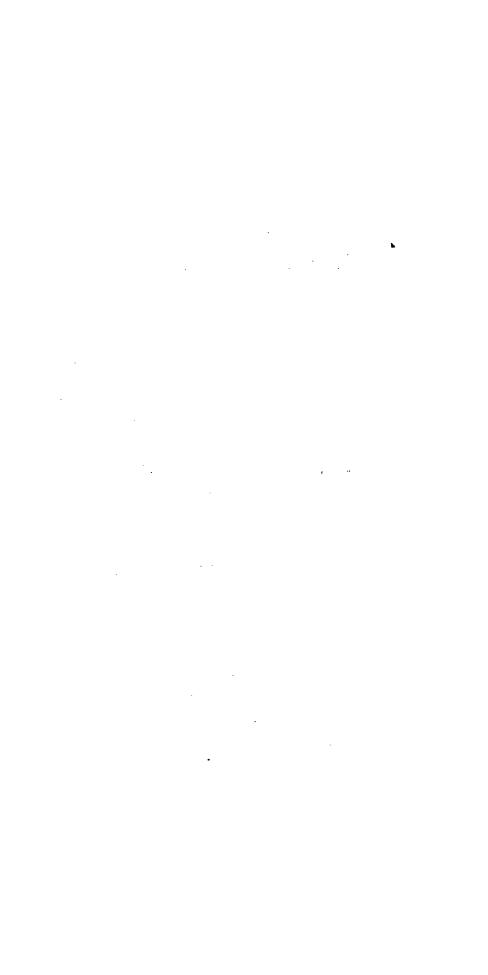




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THE

WARD OF THE CROWN.



THE

WARD OF THE CROWN.

A HISTORICAL NOVEL.



BY THE AUTHOR OF

"SEYMOUR OF SUDLEY," "THE POFE AND THE ACTOR,"

"THE FORESTER'S DAUGITER."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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1845.



THE

WARD OF THE CROWN.

CHAPTER I.

Though no Thucydides has recorded the horrors attendant on the long civil wars, between the houses of York and Lancaster, which ravaged England during the fifteenth century, the numerous battles, and the vast numbers of the slain, are sufficient evidence of the ruin and affliction of the land and its inhabitants. A hundred thousand men are supposed to have fallen in pitched battles, but no calculation has been made of those who, when their ripe corn was trodden down, or their barns plundered by the needy

soldiers—who, when their homes were burnt and their kindred slaughtered, perished for want and sorrow by the way side; no account has been taken of the widows and orphans, who, famished and broken hearted, sunk unheeded, into an untimely grave—of the aged, whose length of years was shortened by deprivation—of the sick, who perished for want of needful care.

Yet so terrible were the vicissitudes of these times, that no class of society was exempt from such trials.

The afflictions of Margaret of Anjou, and her husband, King Henry the Sixth, with those of many of their noble adherents and enemies, have been recorded in history, and made the theme of immortal verse. But the trials of many an unknown wife and mother, were not less poignant than those of the Queen, and scenes often occurred in private life that were not surpassed, in solemn interest, by the tragic destinies of lorldly men, though, like the rain-drops of the tempest upon the torrent, they fell unmarked amidst that raging strife, and left no trace behind.

Another evil of these and all other lawless times, was the unbridled liberty of individual passion. Private hatred, revenge, and cupidity had scarcely need of the mask of party zeal, to perpetrate with impunity their worst enormities and evil natures in these evil days, unrestrained by earthly authority, and fearless of aught beside, found ample opportunity to glut their worst propensities.

If a well directed arrow could win by the untimely death of the rich man, a premature inheritance for his impatient heir, no one brought the archer to justice; and if brother drew his sword on brother, and the father drove his first-born with curses from his roof, they were common things, which provoked neither wonder nor observation.

Yet the true old English character was too fraught, by nature, with generosity and sterling honesty, not to produce many bright examples of the noblest virtues, even amidst times thus wild and corrupt, and religion and the sweet spirit of love were still at woman's side, sustaining her to bind up the wounded, and to pour balm into the bleeding heart. In spite of the doctrines of Wickliff, faith in the established religion of the land, was then strong in the hearts of the most suffering part of the population, and when, during a temporary cessation of hostilities, or the distance of the contending armies, the public roads could be trodden with safety, bands of poor pilgrims were continually to be seen, resorting to some favourite shrine, to offer up their prayers to the Throne of Mercy, for the safety of those most dear to them, and the restoration of peace to their harassed country.

In those counties far removed from the metropolis and the influence of its fashions and its vices, this was peculiarly the case, and in the wild districts of Northumberland and Durham, a kind of savage loyalty and honor, peculiar to their warlike inhabitants, who were exposed to the miseries of border strife, at all times stood greatly in the place of law.

Margaret of Anjou had, with her son, there sought refuge and aid, in the most desperate crisis of the royal fortunes; multitudes of young men and old, had left their homes during the wars, to take up arms in defence of the House of Lancaster, and when on the fifteenth of May, 1463, more than two thousand men fell at the unfortunate battle of Hexham, between Lord Montague and King Henry the Sixth, the voice of lamentation was to be heard from mountain and from plain, through all that desolate country.

Scarcely a family, however poor, but had some beloved one to mourn; and though the necessities of existence compelled the bereaved father, and the heart stricken widow to toil, tears watered the soil, as the spade and the harrow obliterated the traces of blood.

Two days later, the news of the fatal battle and the report of the approach of the Conqueror's army had spread universal consternation through the old town of Newcastle upon Tyne. The walls were manned day and night, by the freemen, of this independent town and county, whilst a small party of Lancastrian soldiers in the old square Castle, built by Robert, the son of William the Conqueror, on the banks of the river, lost no time in collecting such a store of provisions, as might enable them, in case of necessity, to stand a protracted siege.

On the morning of the 18th of May, the rain was falling steadily and fast, from the dense, low clouds, and the water poured in torrents, over the projecting eaves of the wooden houses, and down the narrow streets that covered the steep banks of the broad river Tyne. A more than usual bustle and activity pervaded the town; numbers of the peasantry from the upper country had there sought refuge, and many of the wounded soldiers from Hexham had been brought thither for aid.

The inhabitants of Newcastle, already impoverished by exactions, by the interruption of commerce and the ravages of war, rarely

opened their houses to these miserable visitants; hundreds sought shelter in the churches St. Nicholas, St. John, and St. Anne, whilst the doors of the different monasteries and convents were absolutely besieged by supplicants. Yet, in the midst of all this misery and confusion, a band of Pilgrims who had arrived the preceding night from a distant part of the county of Durham, after hearing mass in the church of St. Nicholas, hastened to recommence their pious journey.

The Holy Well, whither their steps were directed, is still to be seen on the picturesque banks of a narrow valley, not two miles distant from Newcastle; and so numerous were the devotees who annually resorted thither, that the principal street of the town through which they passed towards the North, obtained the name it still bears, of Pilgrim-street.

The party in question consisted of about twenty stout, healthy peasants, male and female, who would have been much better employed in tilling the desolated land. The

journey had been imposed as a penance by their priests, on most of the party, but it had been so often performed in the course of their lives, that habit made it rather a pleasure, than a pain. The women, inured to all weathers, in that uncertain climate, proceeded gaily along, with bare feet, amidst the mud; their woollen garments gathered up nearly to the knee, and the rain dripping from the coarse kerchiefs tied over their heads, whilst the men, with staff in hand, coarse brown frocks and large slouched hats, adorned with the scallop shell, led on the way with many a light word and merry jest, that seemed neither accordant with misery that surrounded them, nor with the sacred object of their journey.

But there was one poor creature, who, accompanied by a monk, followed, with tottering steps, in the rear of this rustic party, and evidently borne down by sorrow, and spent with fatigue, seemed unconscious of their untimely mirth. She was a young, fair woman, who had probably scarcely reached

her twentieth year, yet she bore an infant in her arms, and the bloom of youth, had vanished from her cheeks. Her fine, thin clothing, was of the quality and fashion of that worn, by the highest class, and though her dress was in many parts torn, and saturated with mud and wet, the movements of her emaciated figure were full of grace and delicacy.

It was in vain that the monk who accompanied her, offered repeatedly to carry her babe—she only shook her head, and imprinted a kiss on its brow.

The rain dripped from the tresses of her long, dark hair, which, escaped from her hood, fell dishevelled over her face and shoulders; but she knew it not, and was wholly employed, in endeavouring to defend her sleeping infant from the pelting of the storm, by drawing, ever and anon, the relics of a tattered silken scarf, over his blooming face. Tears were in her large, blue eyes, yet she smiled as she gazed on the peaceful cherub, and then pressed him nearer to her heart; and that heart had great need of such

comfort, for she had lost all save that child, upon earth. And the consciousness, that her helpless infant, had no longer a father to protect it, in that wilderness of calamity, had alone given her strength to wander so far from the battle field of Hexham, which had proved the grave of her happiness.

Her delicate frame had long been unequal to the trials and troubles of the war, and her last overwhelming calamity, had not only completed the ruin of her shattered constitution, but greatly disordered the intellect of a creature nourished, till her eighteenth year, in the lap of prosperity and love. She forgot all, save one, whom she had lost, yet they were many; and she had no wish, no hope upon earth, save to claim for her child, ere she died, the protection of her dead husband's relatives.

The good priest who accompanied her, once the confessor of her father's family, approving of her design, though he doubted her power to accomplish it, had forsaken all other duties, to assist the feeble lady in this

last office of maternal love, and as the road to the dwelling of the great man to whose protection she was anxious to confide her child, lay through the pilgrims' gate, she had insisted that morning on following in the rear of the devotees, as the surest mode of escaping from the town, where every avenue was secured with bolts, and bars, and armed men.

But she was not destined to accomplish this, her last desire. Though the purpose of the heart was strong, the body was weak, wasted to the very brink of the grave; and even as the dark portals were opened for the egress of the pilgrims, and a hundred steps would have carried her beyond the walls, her strength utterly forsook her, and she was obliged to pass her arm around the base of a stone cross, before an ancient portal, to prevent her falling with her infant to the ground. All things danced and swam in confusion before her eyes, yet she heard the heavy clang of the closing gates, and a faint crylike the wail of the hunted deer burst from

her lips at the sound. It was the last effort of exhausted nature, and in another moment she lay insensible on the cold, wet steps of the cross.

When she again unclosed her eyes, she was reposing on a clean pallet, in the hospital of the Convent, before the door of which she had fallen. Her first movement was to stretch forth her hand to feel if her child were near, and a smile parted her pale lips. when she found it sleeping on the edge of her bed, and took its rosy hand in her long, thin fingers. Two nuns, and the friendly priest, by whose care she had been brought into the convent, were watching near her, but she took no heed of them, till called upon to participate in the last sad offices of religion, which her evident danger rendered it impossible to defer. Her voice was scarcely audible, as she responded to the questions of the confessor, but when all was over, she seemed to feel that her trials on earth were done, and a heavenly peace replaced the former anxious expression of her thin, pale

features. She paid no attention to aught that passed around her, but like a creature in a dream, she repeated, at intervals, the name of Reginald, between many endearing epithets, and caressed her child, as she smiled on him with ineffable love.

This lasted till the evening, and then, after long watching her sleeping infant with an earnest gaze, that seemed to strive to pierce the mysteries of time, and to read his future destiny, she heaved a deep sigh, and faintly murmuring "Reginald, I come," closed her eyes as if to slumber. But her sleep was the sleep of death, and when the nuns at length withdrew the child from her encircling arms, her hands were cold and clammy.

"By the mercy of of heaven, her soul, released from this sad world of trial, has gone to rejoin the blest," said the monk as he gazed on the corpse, with mingled love and sorrow. "When I watched her like a fair flower, bud and bloom, I little thought it would be my sad task to lay her so soon in the grave. Wash and lay the body in its coffin, my sisters, with tenderness and pious love, as you would that a gentle hand should perform the same sad offices for you. Meanwhile, give me the child, and I will wait in the outer ward, to learn if you find any papers among the lady's garments."

So saying the kind hearted confessor took the infant in his arms, and having laid it on a bed in the outer chamber, sat down to watch its slumbers. Many sad remembrances of the past, and anxious thoughts for the future, forced themselves on his mind, during the time he thus awaited the reappearance of the nuns, and more than once he brushed the tears from his eyes, when like a dream of other days, the poor dead wanderer arose before him, in all the joyous beauty of her childhood, and the happiness of a father's Then came the overwhelming consciousness that all were alike dust, the parents and their child, and that child's gallant husband, who had perished with his father-in-law on the field of Hexham.

The entrance of sister Bridget, first

disturbed his meditations. She bore a small packet of papers, tied with a silken cord, and a cross, set with large brilliants, which, suspended by a fine cord, she had found resting on the heart of the unfortunate lady.

"Here is likewise her wedding ring," she said, delivering it to the monk. "You will see the initials of herself and her husband, engraved in the inside, with the date of her marriage; only a year and a half ago, poor thing! and by the coronet at the back of the cross, she was probably of a noble family. But I warrant you know all her history, though you have told us nothing."

"It was her wish to conceal her name and family," was the confessor's reply, "but you augur rightly as to her rank, sister Bridget. These are indeed times to teach us that human destiny is in the hands of the Lord, when we see the proudest nobles, one day at the head of an army, and the next, upon a scaffold, or serving barefooted for their bread, whilst their wives and children

are left, like this poor lady and her babe, to perish of want and misery."

The cries of the child at this moment prevented the nun making any reply, nor, althought her curiosity was powerfully awakened, could she obtain any further information from the priest. She knew not even whither he went, when after having witnessed the funeral of the lady, he took the child in his arms, and left the convent.

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CHAPTER. II.

THE coast of Northumberland, extending northward from the banks of the river Tyne to Scotland, forms in many parts, a wild and magnificent barrier of rocks, against the encroachments of the German ocean, whose furious waves, borne by the sweeping North wind from the Pole, often, in times of storm, cast their foam far inland, as their giant arches burst against the beetling crags.

The ruined remains of many noble castles and extensive monasteries, still add a picturesque and romantic interest to the severe character of the scenery, and in the fifteenth century, the strong fortresses, so necessary for the defence of the kingdom from Scottish invasion, were still in complete repair. They were commonly well garrissoned and provisioned for a siege, and the whole district was inhabited by a race of warlike men, who had grown up in the practice of arms, and in the wild life of adventure, attendant on a half civilised state of society, and the immediate neighbourhood of a hostile country. Even the dwelling places of the gentry were petty fortresses, and constructed as places of refuge for their own cattle, and that of their poorer neighbours, in case of an expected inroad from the Scottish borders.

During the long wars of the houses of York and Lancaster, the castles of Alnwick, Bamborough, Dunstanborough, and many others had been under the command of experienced generals of the respective parties, as the vicissitudes of war placed them alternately in the power of the Red Rose, or the White. Though the majority of the ancient families of the North of England were partisans of the family of Henry the Sixth, yet the signal defeat of his army at the battle of Hexham, effected a wonderful change in many men's politics, and all, who had till then remained neuter, declared openly for the House of York.

Sir Hugh Collingwood, the head of an old Northumbrian family, had, from the commencement of the war, been ardently devoted to that party. His father, Sir Ralph, had driven his eldest son from his house, because he refused to take up arms against his Sovereign Lord, King Henry the Sixth, and it was believed, he had since perished on the battle field. The extensive possessions of the family, consequently descended, on the death of the elder Knight, to his second son Sir Hugh.

The castellated dwelling of the family was situated, only a few miles from the base of the Cheviot hills, in one of the wildest and most picturesque valleys of that

Ellington Tower was romantic country. said to have been built soon after the Norman conquest, by the ancestor of the family, who had received the original grant of the Fief from the crown. Its heavy, round arches and massive walls of rude masonry, confirmed the truth of the tradition. and battlemented walls surrounded the keep and the dwelling house with its stables and barns, which had been added to the stern old Tower, by successive generations, in many gradations of gothic architecture; but the meadows around it were bright and gay, and the old ash and beech trees on the banks of the rivulet that intersected them, larger and more luxuriant, than are commonly seen so near the coast of the German ocean.

The inhabitants of the neighbouring village of Bellinghem were almost all retainers of the Collingwoods. The parish priest was their confessor, and the church the burying place of the family. Of all who had died at home, or abroad, during the four

preceding centuries, only one gravestone was wanting, and next the tomb of old Sir Ralph, still remained a vacant niche for the body of his eldest son—his banished heir—the accursed of his father, and the sole idol of his devoted mother Lady Isabel, who seemed only to survive her husband, to mourn over the mysterious destiny of her first born.

Six children she had seen laid, in their childhood and their youth, in the grave; but her noble Reginald survived, and she was comforted. The hour when he was cast forth from his paternal home, she for the first time felt, as if the shadows of despair had gathered around her; the very air she breathed seemed to dry up her aching heart; she scarcely tasted food, and for hours she remained mourning in solitude over the past.

She had long taken little pleasure in aught save her adored child, for her husband, a rude sportsman and soldier, was one of those cold-hearted tyrants, who despise a woman's love, and her second son, Hugh, was

of a character little in harmony with her own frank nature. Well aware that he had been reserved and false from childhood, she had, with a sense of a mother's duty, long striven, but in vain, to regard him with affection, but ever and anon, some evil trait of his disposition betrayed itself, which made her heart revolt. Though he grew up to be a handsome and gallant Knight, and his more than common breeding and courtesy were regarded with admiration by the gentlemen of the county, she knew the secret of his real character too well, to feel any pride in his apparently noble qualities. wife, who had long lived only for the child she loved, was alone in the world! nald was gone-they told her Reginald was dead-yet his grave was empty, and she had neither the sad consolation of weeping above his tomb, nor of hoping that her bones should one day mingle with his.

She saw the long and stately funeral of her husband pass from the Castle to the church, but it cost her no tear, and when Sir Hugh took formal possession of his father's property, as the next heir, she alone refused to acknowledge his right to do so. No eloquence could persuade her that Reginald was dead. Her life was only sustained by the hope that he would one day return to claim his lands.

She withdrew herself from the cares of Sir Hugh's household, and retired with a single servant to a small dower house and farm on the skirts of his domain, where, in solitude and seclusion, her mind dwelt so exclusively and intensely on the sole object of her love and her anxiety, that external circumstances lost all power to engage her attention. For long hours she sat in her desolate chamber, lonely and unoccupied, and when the rain and the clouds were drifting darkly down from the Cheviot hills, she wandered forth over the desolate heaths, as if she sought to cool the fever in her brain by the winds and the showers of Heaven.

These were her happiest hours, for then her son was ever at her side, sometimes as the young child, who, by his infant sports, had beguiled the long years of her uncongenial wedlock—sometimes as the gallant youth, who had confided to her his love for the daughter of a noble Lancastrian Lord, and his devotedness to the persecuted King. And then the hour of their sad separation returned with all its anguish to her mind, and the mother wept almost to madness, as she repeated again and again aloud to the passing winds, the blessing she had at parting pronounced above his head.

Her food was poor and sparing; she took no heed of her attire, and her wasted and neglected person lost, ere long, all traces of its early beauty. The country people, who held all belonging to the family of Collingwood in reverence, regarded the Lady of the Manor with mysterious awe; every poor man's head was uncovered, as she passed with silent and melancholy dignity, through the little crowd before the church door on Sundays and festivals, and though her attire was wild and grotesque, its eccentricity ex-

excited no feeling save that of regret, in the minds of these honest people. They had once known her young, gay, and lovely, and there was not a cottage in the whole district where her lost son had not been beloved and honoured as the heir of their master, Sir Ralph.

Strangers called Lady Isabel mad, but her poor neighbours knew her history too well, to allow the truth of the epithet; and in fact, though the strong heart and powerful mind of the lady had been severed from the world, and concentrated on one sad subject of interest, by her heavy afflictions, the excitement of some important event would at any time have sufficed to recal her acute intellect to all its original activity.

An apparent amity existed between her son, Sir Hugh, and herself, yet they rarely met, and only when an interview was absolutely necessary, for the transaction of business.

The Lady Isabel, as co-heiress of a branch of the noble family of De Vere, was possessed of considerable estates in her own right, VOL. I. C

part of which, with her family plate, and jewels of great value, were entailed upon her eldest son, or his heir. These, the strong hearted woman resolutely refused to deliver up to Sir Hugh, until he had proved to her, indisputable evidence of the death of her first born, and in spite of his ardent desire to obtain possession of this valuable property, three months elapsed after his father's death, without his having been able to gain any tidings of his brother Reginald.

Every hour the devoted mother clung with closer attachment to the heir-looms of her family, as if their possession was, in itself, an evidence of the existence of her son. Sir Hugh was at all times an extravagant, and, therefore, a needy man, and on his return from the battle of Hexham, he was more than usually in want of money, to equip a troop of fifty horsemen, with which he had promised to rejoin the army of Lord Montague, in the course of a week.

His estates were all entailed, and the

want of convincing evidence of his brother's death had hitherto rendered it impossible for him to raise a supply on his life interest, even from the Jews of York. Lady Isabel's jewels were, therefore, more than ever the object of his cupidity, and fearful scenes occurred after his return from the battle field, between the mother and son, with regard to this ill omened treasure; but the Lady still remained firm to her original resolution.

15. It was a dull and gloomy morning, and the air of earth seemed to press heavily on the soul of man, when Sir Hugh resolved to make another effort to win the prize he In sullen and vindictive mood covetted. he passed over the desolate moor, and along the broken banks of the wild stream that divided their properties. The sun thickly veiled by lowering clouds, and the outline of the hills was lost in floating mists, which in the distance hid all distinction between earth and sky. The wind came in fitful gusts up the valley, rustling the old elm trees above the head of the Knight, and mingling drearily its howling voice as it swept over the moors, with the gushing of the swollen rivulet.

Sir Hugh was in no mood to observe either, yet both had their gloomy influence on his mind, and disposed him, as he reflected on the pressing nature of his necessities, to resort to the most desperate measures for the accomplishment of his wishes; to measures, which, but for his lavish expenditure, he would have disdained to employ. But extravagance, though not an actual crime, is too often the parent of many.

In such a frame of mind, he passed the threshold of his mother's dwelling, and proceeded unannounced to the chamber she habitually occupied.

There was nothing cheering in its aspect. Though the snow still covered the Northern hills, no fire burnt in the chimney, no rushes covered the paved floor, and the East wind whistled sadly through the uncurtained and rudely fashioned casements.

A deal table and three high backed, wooden chairs, were all the furniture it contained, and the lady sat alone, with an illuminated M. S. missal open before her, in which her darkened soul had sought words of comfort, but had found them not. Her stiff, tall figure, was drawn up to its full height, and her clasped, cold hands rested on the table like those of a stone statue above an ancient tomb.

The entrance of Sir Hugh disturbed her not—she formally returned his salutation, and then motioned with her head for him to be seated; but she extended no hand towards him, she gave him no welcome.

"My departure is fixed for to-morrow, Madam," he said, when apparently unconscious of her repulsive manner, he had quietly taken the chair opposite to her, "and as no man knows the fate that awaits him in war, I have come to ask your blessing ere I go!"

"My blessing, say you!" she returned in a deep and stern voice, "I well know you set little store by that, nor do you err in despising it, for where I best loved, it hath proved little better than a curse. But be frank, Sir Hugh! what else seek you? you have somewhat of more importance in view, or you had not left your morning's good cheer at such an early hour!"

"Nay, my Lady mother, be just, I beg of you," answered the Knight, "it grieves me to the soul, to find you ever think thus hardly of me."

"Justice is out of fashion, and I go with the times," returned the lady with bitter laugh.

"But between a mother and her son methinks the feelings of nature," began Sir Hugh.

"The feelings of nature! bah!" she cried scornfully interrupting him, "who knows aught of the feelings of nature in these fierce, bloody wars, when the father curses his child, and the brother persecutes his brother unto death, whilst the son for a paltry piece of gold would not scruple to pierce the heart of the mother that bore him."

"Yet surely methinks a mother's love—" he again softly began.

"Pollute not the word," cried Lady Isabel, her whole figure dilating with passion, and her eyes flashing with a fire, that seemed a minute before, to be for ever extinguished in their dark orbs, dost thou presume to talk of a mother's love? thou who knowest no more of the soul absorbing passion, the heaven given yearings of a mother's heart, than doth the earth that swallows all her children. Thou talk of love who never knew the feeling! Shame, shame, Sir Hugh; speak truth, however base; I should respect it more than such false eloquence."

"When I speak truths, you wish not to hear, Madam," he returned, "you refuse your belief, when I make demands with which you are not pleased to comply; you deny me justice, when I address you as a dutiful son; you accuse me of hypocrisy; what course in the name of all the saints am I to pursue?"

"Take that which pleases you," she said

"only leave me in peace; your ways are not my ways, and that you know full well."

"I know, Madam, that I tread the paths of honour in the service of my king," answered the knight haughtily, "whilst you in open defiance of justice, deny me those rights to which the law entitles me!"

"Speak in plainer language, sir," returned Lady Isabel in a calm, sarcastic voice, "say that I refuse to yield, to your rapacious avarice, the legal inheritance of my first-born son; that I refuse to strip your brother of his rights, that you, false traitor as you are, may, by the help of his wealth, play with success the sycophant in the usurper's court, and like a blood-hound track the steps of him whom you have robbed of father, home, and land, even to the block! I know you I know whose subtle arts brought down my husband's curse upon his head! and I doubt not that did you see him dying on the battle field, although you feared to murder him, you would not stretch out a finger to save him from certain death. Ha, Sir Hugh,

thou turnest pale, thine eyes shrink beneath mine! hast thou done this, and yet survive the stings of conscience?"

"Madam, forbear!" exclaimed the knight absolutely staggering beneath his mother's withering glances; and his passion wrought past all control, he grasped the arm of the rigid figure at his side, as he continued, "another word, and though I am thy son, by all the Saints, my patience will have end!"

"What! you will silence me with a dagger perhaps! Do what you will! your deeds have already stabbed my heart as deeply as your steel can do."

"In the name of the Holy Mother, Madam, a truce to this violence," said Sir Hugh, who, though for a moment roused to fury by an allusion that had awakened the remembrance of most painful circumstances, speedily mastered his anger, "you talk of a mother's feelings, yet forget I am your son!"

"Oh, God forgive me that I have borne such a son!" was Lady Isabel's sole reply.

"I have given you the most positive as-

surances of my brother's death in the battle of Hexham," continued the knight without noticing this exclamation, "yet you still deny me my inheritance."

"When I have seen his grave, and brought the precious corpse to crumble with the dust of all his ancestors, then, and not till then, will I believe your tale," she returned. "Should it be true, I should not wonder if your own spear had struck him to the heart; and at all hazards thou wert a white-hearted knight to fear to give Christian burial to the man who died in arms for Lancaster; a miserable coward, that durst not forsooth mutter a prayer over the body of his father's son, but left the poor uncovered corpse for dogs to feed upon. But I believe not a word of the story; it is a clumsy fabrication, and when next you seek to cheat me to your purposes, frame your lie more cunningly, Sir Hugh, if you expect me to be imposed upon."

"Madam, were you not my mother, I should better know how to answer you," he said with outward calmness, though his lips

quivered with suppressed rage; "as it is, a truce to further argument. For the last time, I demand, will you give me the jewels which are my birthright, or must I to the King, and claim the aid of his authority, to compel a mother to do justice to her son?"

"Go to your precious traitor, Edward of York—go by all means! he loves such jovial company, though I do not, and tell him that I scorn his power and yours. And for the jewels Sir, you may add, if it please you, that till my eldest born sleeps with his fathers in Bellingham Church, no threats shall wring them from me, either to purchase you the mockery of honour in his upstart court, or to deck his city mistresses."

"Since Lord Montague's victory, the law is once more strong, Madam," answered the relentless son.

"Tyranny, not law!" she returned, "but do your worst! Death I defy, and for the treasure, it is hid so cunningly, that not ten thousand such as you, without my consent can ever discover it."

"Beware, Madam! beware! nor drive me to extremities. This is the last time, by heaven, that I will ask for that which is by law my own, and if nought can purchase justice but the bones of Reginald, by all the Saints, they shall be yours ere long. I ask your blessing."

"When as a son you merit it, it shall be yours, but not till then," returned the undaunted woman. "Fare you well."

"Farewell, Madam," returned Sir Hugh, with a countenance of most sarcastic bitterness, as he paused for a moment near the door, "farewell; and trust me you shall have the evidence you covet ere many weeks have passed.

Long after the Knight had departed these words wrung fearfully on the mother's ears. They were like an evil prophecy which she had herself provoked, and she shrunk with horror from the possibility of their accomplishment.

The hour of her mid-day meal passed over, yet she broke not bread; the evening

was fast approaching, yet still she sat with her missal open before her, cold and silent as a statue, save that at times she unconsciously chanted wild snatches of a border ballad, or lament over the slain, and then as suddenly ceased, even in the middle of a line.

At length she hastily arose, and with no other protection from the rain, then falling fast, than the thin, black scarf she cast over her head and shoulders, with hurried steps she left her dwelling.

Her old servant shook her head and sighed, as she flitted past her window, but she knew that any remonstrance would be in vain, and the lady glided on like a shadow over the heath, towards the village of Bellingham. It was to the church her steps were directed. In those times the door of the holy edifice was at all hours open, for the pious to offer up their payers; and Lady Isabel, without heeding the wetness of her garments, crossed the threshold, and passed on to that part of the building where the tombs of the Col-

lingwoods, for many generations, were carved with rude art. The stone statues of the grandfather of Sir Hugh and his wife lay side by side upon a high gothic bier, next them Sir Ralph was buried, and in the niche beside his tomb, his widow had marked out a place for the graves of herself and her son Reginald.

To this spot she came daily to pray for his welfare if living, and the peace of his soul if dead.

The heavy old Norman Church was low and damp and gloomy. Father Ambrose, the parish priest, was commonly the only person who entered it at the hour of the lady's private devotions, and however extraordinary might then be the manifestations of her feelings, he understood their import well, and even looked with pity and indulgence on the mother's woe.

This evening he came at his accustomed time; but he was not alone. A monk was at his side, and they stood silently observing her together, near one of the heavy pillars of the opposite aisle. She knelt upon the damp, cold stones, and her spare figure, in her mourning garments, was fitfully visible in the dim light of a narrow, painted window above her head, sometimes waving to and fro, as her wild thoughts travelled rapidly, sometimes fixed like a statue, with her pale face upturned in anxious prayer, her scarf falling back from her sable locks, and her half parted lips breathing disjointed words of inward agony. Then she sang a snatch of a psalm, and then abruptly changing the air to one of wild lament, she continued in low, wailing notes, that brought tears to the eyes of her listeners, the following words, well known as a border dirge:—

"Bleeding and faint on the field of death,
The warrior gazed around,
He prayed for help with his parting breath,
But no creature heard the sound.

My mother—my mother! he feebly cried!
No mother was there to hear;
The winds to his wail alone replied,
And the earth was his only bier.

For the dead man's soul they said no mass,

They rang no funeral knell,

And the whitening bones in the tall rank grass,

Still lie where the warrior fell.'

Softly the last words of her song died away, awakening no echo in the gloomy pile, and the mother wildly stretching forth her arms, remained fixed for a few moments in silent supplication.

"Yes, yes, the day will come," she cried, "when I shall gather together those precious relics, and lay them in the grave; my wishes even on earth shall be fulfilled," and making the sign of the Cross, she arose and left the church, without remarking those, who, with the deepest interest, had watched all her movements. Little did she dream there was one then in the church who could have spoken words of comfort to her soul, such as she scarcely dared to hope would ever greet her ears on earth.

"Mad, mad! lost to all power of reason," was the exclamation of the stranger monk, as she disappeared.

All he had previously heard being confirmed by what he had now witnessed, he was convinced that no reliance could be placed on the unsettled intellect of the un-

fortunate lady, and silently resolved to confide to another the important secret it had been the purpose of his journey thither to communicate to her. And the whole destiny of Lady Isabel for many future years was changed by that luckless hour. The soothing cup of peace and love, the stranger was anxious to proffer to her lips, was dashed aside, and she was left to wear away her existence in grief and hopeless solitude.

So trifling are the accidents that direct the current of life. A word misunderstood—a glance misinterpreted—the vicissitudes of the weather—another man's delay—another man's forgetfulness, have often ere now disappointed the proudest hopes, and withered the first buds of good fortune—brought sunshine to the mourner, or saved the young and rejoicing from unforeseen ruin and despair. All are alike the instrument of Providence.

CHAPTER III.

SIR HUGH after his stormy interview with his mother, slowly retraced his steps to his home. He passed through the great wall without paying any attention to the lounging officers and pages who were there playing at tables,* chess and cards, and retiring into his own private room, he ordered fresh wood on the fire, and a flagon of wine to drown care; he then seated himself in gloomy mood, to think over the course most expedient for him to pursue.

^{*} See the Paston Letters.

Drinking was the favourite vice in the Northern counties, during that and many following centuries, and the knight was not surpassed by any of the neighbouring gentry, in the depth of his potations, when seated by the social board. But that evening he desired no companions; even wine could not inspire any feeling in his heart, that he wished to communicate to another's friendly ear.

Dark remembrances thronged upon his mind—fearful images flitted before his brain. which he would fain have banished, but they would not be put away, and well aware that the empty mirth of his ordinary companions would have been powerless to dispel his gloomy abstraction, he resolved, at last, that no one should be witness of it. He trusted that wine would change the current of his thoughts; but vainly he swallowed goblet after goblet; it seemed only to render more distinct the visions of battle fields, and the wounded and the dying, which passed before him in dread array, and darkest and most fearful of all, the image of his brother Reginald weltering in his blood at his feet, as he had last beheld him, in the battle of Hex-He heard his cries for aid—his vain cries to the brother he had recognized amidst the whirl and confusion of the combat, and he strove to close his ears as he did then, against this heart rending appeal for mercy. But his soul heard the sounds. He felt their echo was undying as eternity, and the terrible consciousness, that though he had aimed no stroke at his brother's life, yet, that morally, he had been his murderer, embittered that hour, as it had done many of each day, that had followed this coward crime.

Yet even whilst thus suffering from the stings of conscience, he was enraged to think, that he had hitherio derived no profit from his guilt. He had sworn again and again to his mother, that he had seen her favourite son dead upon the field of battle; but she refused to receive his evidence alone, as proof of a fact, she wished not to believe; and the only answer she ever returned him, was a

torrent of reproaches for having, if his narrative were true, left his brother's body without Christian burial.

Having been sent by Lord Montague on the evening of the battle, to raise fresh recruits in the North, and put his house in the best possible state of defence, against an expected inroad from Scotland in favour of the Lancastrians, he had been unable to make any search for his brother's body, immediately after his death, and an order he had now received to join the royal army of Edward the Fourth, on the morrow, rendered all chance of procuring further evidence, impossible for a time.

He had wrought under various pretexts to delay this journey until his empty purse was replenished by his mother's jewels; but a letter he had that morning received announcing, that in spite of Lord Hastings's intercession with the king, his excuses no longer met a favourable reception, rendered all further delay impossible.

His orders were already given, and all

things in readiness for his departure on the morrow, yet he took no thought of repose, and flinging another huge log on the fire, as the distant village clock struck the midnight hour, he sat apparently lost in thought, watching the progress of the flames as they flickered and curled around it.

He was first disturbed from this half dreaming state, by the sound of a horse beneath the walls. Then a shrill blast at the gate, provoked the challenge of the warder, and anon he heard the drawbridge lowered, and a bustle in the court beneath, announced the arrival of a stranger; a circumstance so unwonted at such an hour, excited both his curiosity and anxiety, nor were either in any degree diminished, when a servant announced, that a man in the garments of a monk, had just arrived from Newcastle, and wished to communicate with him immediately on business of importance.

Fearful of another, and perhaps angry summons from the King, the Knight ordered a second flagon of wine to be brought, and the stranger to be conducted, without delay, to his apartment.

Both commands were quickly obeyed, though the first was a needless provision, for the monk refused the proffered cheer.

He was a tall, dark, thin man, about five and forty years of age. He wore the dress of his order, and there was something in the quiet dignity of his simple manner that at once overawed the Knight. His ordinary smooth yet audacious courtesy, entirely forsook him, and when they were left alone, it was with an embarrassment he could not master that he demanded, to what circumstance he was indebted for the honour of the stranger's company.

"My intrusion would certainly demand some excuse," replied the Priest, "did I come hither at this dead hour of the night on matters that concerned myself; but Sir Hugh Collingwood will, doubtless, pardon me, when he knows that my visit has no personal object."

"May I presume you are a royal mes-

senger?" replied the Knight with increasing awe and wonder.

- "No, I am not so honoured," was the answer, "my business is of a private, not a public nature, though, I apprehend, not therefore the less important. You are the second son, Sir, I believe, of Sir Ralph Collingwood?" he added, in a tone that changed the whole current of his listener's thoughts in an instant.
- "Yes! the second son, and sole surviving heir," was the Knight's caustic reply.
- "Yes, so I have been informed," calmly responded the Priest, "since it is believed that Reginald the eldest son was slain at the battle of Hexham. But is that certain, Sir Hugh?"
- " Alas! I grieve to say," sighed his host,
 " I saw him myself in the thickest of the
 fight, stricken down by an arrow from Lord
 Montague's archers and trodden under foot
 by the flying Lancastrians."
 - " And the body ?"
 - " I found it on the morrow, and gave it

Christian burial," answered the Knight with an unblushing cheek. "The features were so disfigured, I could scarcely recognise my brother."

- "Might you not be deceived?" inquired the stranger.
- "Oh, no, no; I knew him but too well," returned Sir Hugh, with a shudder no art could feign. "There cannot be a doubt of his death; but may I ask, Sir Priest," he continued in a more decided tone, for he had now no longer any fears of royal displeasure, "if you come not with the King's authority, by what right you presume to question me in this strange manner?"
- "You have probably heard of Lady Margaret Selwyn, and her connexion with your family," returned the stranger tranquilly. "If you will only take the trouble to peruse these papers, you will, without further explanation, understand the cause of my intrusion," and he handed, as he spoke, a small packet to the Knight.

Sir Hugh unfolded the papers it contained VOL. 1. D

with the utmost eagerness, and scarcely had he glanced over a few lines of the first, when his eyes flashed, and his florid visage became pale with rage.

"Another heir!" he exclaimed, "In the name of all the saints, what audacious folly is this? Have you yet to learn that no traitor, who dies in arms and open rebellion against his King, can talk of heirs. When my brother Reginald went into the field of battle for feeble Lancaster, he forfeited his birth-right; and had not his father, old Sir Ralph, and I, been most zealous servants to the House of York, all the ancient possessions of our ancestors had now been seized by the crown."

"It is possible, Sir Hugh," was the reply of the monk, "for power in this world is not always justly exercised. But yet the ties of consanguinity are sacred, in good men's hearts—affection for a brother's memory a yet more holy bond; and on that feeling in your breast, I have presumed to count,

though I know, to my sorrow, that evenhanded justice no longer bears the scales in this distracted kingdom."

"These are fine texts for your sermons, no doubt," answered the Knight with a sneer, "but would afford a sorry excuse for the fool who should strip himself of his house and lands, in open defiance of the King's pleasure. Let me hear no more of such audacious expectations, Sir Priest; and the next time you make a midnight journey over the moors, I advise you to carry your merchandise to a better market;" and as he ceased speaking, he threw the papers with indignation on the table.

The monk quietly gathered them together, and replaced them in the folds of his garment, ere he replied, "I am disappointed, I will candidly tell you, Sir Hugh—even for your own sake, I am disappointed by the result of this interview. I have placed it in your power to do a noble and generous action; but since your heart is equally callous to a sense of justice, and the tender

charities of life, I must appeal to others, to befriend my cause. Trust me, I despair not; the times are full of change, and York may not for ever wear the crown he has usurped. Those who triumph to-day, should yet be prudent, and make friends amongst the ranks of their enemies, to save them from the scaffold, to which to-morrow may see them condemned."

"You are a politic knave, by my faith," said the Knight, who, when his first passion subsided, quickly perceived the course most expedient for him to pursue, in the unforeseen emergency in which he was placed. "In truth," he continued, "there is reason in what you say, and if the proofs were indisputable——"

- "Beyond all shadow of doubt!"
- "And were I disposed to listen to them, must I accept them on your unsupported authority?"
- "Certainly not! The papers, you perceive, are all drawn out and signed in regular order; and when the times are more

tranquil, I can produce many witnesses. In the meantime, you will perhaps lend more credence to my story, when I inform you, that I was confessor to my Lord Selwyn, and attended him during his last moments. You have seen me frequently at his table, Sir Hugh, when you were a youth; when we were both of his household, ere he had taken part in the civil wars."

The Knight surveyed his guest with a more observant glance than before, and was unwillingly compelled to admit the fact of their previous acquaintance.

Such was the high and well deserved reputation of the priest, that, after this admission, he could no longer presume to dispute the truth of his assertions. He saw likewise that his best policy was to temporise; and, drawing the holy man again into conversation, he pretended to be convinced by his arguments; then perusing with attention the papers he had before cast from him with disdain, he felt that it was of the utmost importance to him to become possessed of these

documents. Gradually, therefore, changing his manner, he no longer disputed the claims advanced by the priest; and finally, as if conquered by his persuasions, professed his readiness to comply for the present with his charitable wishes, as far as the state of the times permitted; and for the future, should a happier occasion present itself, to fulfil all that moral justice required of him.

The confessor doubted his good faith in spite of these professions; and though he received many fair promises from Sir Hugh, he was too much a man of the world to be beguiled by the courtesy of one, who had so suddenly changed his tone and manner. He well knew the Knight's denial was only softened by a clearer perception of his own interest; and he resolved, in his turn, to defend to the utmost of his power, the interests for which he came thither to plead, with a fond hope of securing a protector, at least, for the fatherless babe, though the changes of the times might for ever deprive it of its hirth-right.

But though the mistrust between the gentleman and his guest was thus mutual, they had formed an, apparently, amicable contract, when, as the first hour of the night struck, the confessor left the castle, and mounting his horse, to the great wonder of the grooms, rode quickly up the road leading towards the hills.

No sooner was all once more quiet in his dwelling, than Sir Hugh retired to the small chamber used as his oratory, and there secured the door, as if anxious not to be interrupted in his devotions. But it was soon evident he had not come thither to pray. He lighted a small lantern, wrapped a cloak, lined with sheep skin, around him, and then touching a spring behind the painted, wooden image of our Lady on the altar, a narrow door flew open, and discovered a winding staircase in the wall.

By this he quickly descended a height of more than forty feet, and then passed rapidly along a narrow, stone, arched passage, under the moat, till at length, after re-mounting a flight of steps, the cold, night air blew into the damp avenue, and the sound of a distant torrent, rushing over a stony bed, was distinctly to be heard.

The moon was shining between the drifting clouds, and Sir Hugh extinguished his light, before he emerged through a cleft in the broken, rocky ground, that externally bore only the appearance of a fox hole, half covered by brambles and hanging weeds and roots, midway up the bank of the wild, mountain stream of which we have previously spoken. He listened a moment, as if afraid of being watched; but all was silent around, save the rushing of the wind and the stream, and the screeching of the owls from the old elm trees. Convinced of this, he quickly turned into the first beaten track he found amongst the bushes, and hurried on with rapid steps, sometimes amongst rocks, and weeds, and briars; at others, over more level ground, where the blue hyacinth and primrose spread a painted mantle. At length he came to a spot where, at a curve of the stream, the banks widened, so as to leave a little, semicircular meadow on the north side of the water.

The moon was low, and the further end of the narrow valley lay in the deep shadow of the hills; yet the Knight distinctly saw a small light, like the ray of a taper, gleaming there, which convinced him he had not mistaken the way. Had he consulted his own desires, even then he would have turned back; but money makes many a stout man a slave, and Sir Hugh thought, a considerable portion of this precious commodity, would be best secured by the sacrifice of his momentary feelings. Over-ruled by such prudent considerations, he hurried on towards the place from whence the light proceeded. It had once been a mill, but the principal part of the building, having been burnt during a Scottish invasion, some eight, or ten years before, the ruined walls hung dark and silent over the passing stream.

One small hovel alone, once part of the miller's abode, had been covered in, and

made fit for a human dwelling place. From a window in this part of the building, the light seen by the Knight proceeded, and at the old oaken door, a few paces to the right of the casement, he softly knocked for admission.

It was immediately opened by the same priest who had been his midnight visiter, and though there was a bland smile upon his lips, a cold shudder shook the frame of Sir Hugh, as he crossed the threshold of the miserable dwelling, and heard the door closed behind him. Yet a good man could have had no cause for apprehension there. No one dwelt in the cottage except the poor miller, who after the destruction of his little property, had fought as a Lancastrian soldier, till, disabled by many wounds, he had recently returned to seek tranquillity and concealment in this secluded spot, and to drag out the remnant of his days, where his merry childhood had been passed.

But Sir Hugh did not even know that he had returned. The old, fixed, wooden bed-

stead still stood against the wall, with its shutters half closed, as he remembered it many years before, when he had sought shelter in the ruin from a heavy storm; but there was no other trace of any provision for human comfort, save the fire, the monk had probably rekindled, the wood laid ready to replenish it, and the small lamp he had hung near the window to guide the steps of his guest.

- "Peace be unto you," said the priest, in a voice so bland and calm, as to banish even the apprehensions of Sir Hugh. "I rejoice, for your own sake, you have not failed in your word. I trust you are still ready to undertake all you have promised."
- "Why should I else come hither?" was the reply; "it is no hour for idle rambles. But methinks you are here alone?"
- "Not quite," replied the confessor, with a smile, and advancing towards the bed, he put his arms within the half closed shutters, and drew forth something, which, in that gloomy corner, appeared to the Knight, a

bundle of tumbled garments. But as the priest advanced towards him with his burthen, the light of the lamp fell upon the blooming features of a sleeping infant.

It was a lovely boy, probably about six months old.

"The likeness is so striking, as to be alone sufficient proof of all I have asserted," said the holy man, as he held the child towards Sir Hugh, and gazed on it himself, with an admiring and loving eye, as if he would gladly have claimed it for his own.

"Old women may spy such resemblances," was the rough reply, "but they are ever lost on me. I find them only between man and man. Give me your papers, Sir Priest. I would fain have the testimony of some other living witness besides yourself, I confess; but since none can now be summoned, let me have the papers at least. At some future day I may find means to establish their validity."

"Of that, Sir Hugh, I have no fear," answered the monk. "You must be well

aware I can have no personal interest to deceive you in this affair; as I have before told you, these papers are all signed by the proper authorities, and drawn up in legal form. am sure there is no need for me to recommend them to your care, nor to implore you to remember the importance of the charge you have undertaken. Though no one else may survive to call you to a future account, my observation will be for ever upon you, to watch how you fulfil the task; and be assured that heaven will reward, or punish you, in just measure, as you perform, or fail in your duty towards the child I now place in your Not only the destiny of this infant, but your own, is in your keeping; and remember, that often when man thinks his secret crimes are crowned with sure prosperity, the arm of vengeance is already stretched forth to strike him down amidst all the glory of his vain exultation."

"I have no wife to whose care I can confide the babe," returned the Knight: "my

wretched mother is mad, past all control, but I give you my solemn oath, he shall be fostered and educated as my own son."

"Till he has reached the age of twenty one; I ask no more," was the reply, "but remember, it will not then be forgotten, that he has other rights; and it is my parting advice to you to be prepared to acknowledge them."

"We may all sleep in the grave long before then," said Sir Hugh, carelessly, who having wrapped the sleeping infant in his cloak was impatient to depart.

The monk, without any reply to these words of doubtful meaning, advanced to take a parting glance of the child, which he had borne in his arms during long days of travel, till his heart clung to it with a parent's love. His duties and its mother's wishes had compelled him to resign it to its father's relatives; but the hard character of Sir Hugh, to whose disadvantage he had previously heard nothing but his being of

the house of York, filled him with mistrust; and when he saw him about to quit the hovel, he would have given much to have been able to recal the confidence he had placed in him. But the die was cast.

- "By what name has the child been baptized?" demanded the Knight, suddenly pausing as he approached the door.
- "By that of Hubert, as you will see by the register," was the priest's reply.
- "I observed it not," rejoined Sir Hugh, "and by my faith, at this dead hour of the night, it is no wonder that my eyes are somewhat dull. I wish you farewell!" and without further salutation, he passed forth into the open moonlight. The monk, with many anxious thoughts for the future, gazed after him for a few moments, and then closing the door, returned into the hovel.
- "All the saints in heaven be praised, that he is safely departed, and I may take a mouthful of fresh air, at last," said a voice from the wooden bedstead, whilst the priest

returned towards the fire, and the head of the worthy miller, crowned with a red, wollen night cap, forthwith made its appearance between the half closed shutters.

- "You heard all, Andrew?" eagerly demanded the confessor.
- "Ay, truly did I. I made good use both of my eyes and my ears," he replied, "for there is a chink in the old planks, and I could see all from my hiding place."
- "And in case of need, you could swear that I gave the child into his hands. You could swear to all that passed?"
- "To every word," he replied. "Yet to speak plainly, holy father, I did not like his manner. But I am always here to be on the watch, and if he deals unfairly by the poor, fatherless babe—you shall hear of it in a trice, when you will have only to call Andrew the miller to give his testimony, and if there be law in the land—"
- "But there is no law in the land," returned the holy man, sadly.

"That cannot last for ever," said the miller, "everything may be upside down for awhile; the king may be called a traitor, and a traitor may be called a king; but that cannot hold long, in old England, at least. There are too many honest, quiet, right thinking people in the land for such abominations to last, and as soon as the unruly, hot-headed rebels, who have thrown all into confusion, have had time enough to kill one another, all things will go on as smoothly as ever again, and Sir Hugh Collingwood may be hanged, if he should commit a murder, as well as any other man."

"Heaven grant he may not deserve it, Andrew," was the reply, "but be it your charge to keep a strict watch upon his actions, and send me intelligence, if anything of vital import happens. You are the only being in the north of England who knows the whole of this sad story, and for the sake of those who are gone, I count on your faithful services."

"I am only sorry you did not trust the

mother rather than the son," returned the old man. "Though his brother Reginald believed him his friend to the last, and only blamed his father for all that had happened, I had no confidence in his plausible professions. He is only less of a hypocrite now, because the usurper's favour secures him his possessions and he defies all other claims. It is true he has no fear of the child, and so I hope will deal justly by it, but for all that I wish his mother had it in the Manor House."

"Had I known both better, I would have considered longer ere I obeyed its mother's injunctions," returned the priest, "for if there is reason to mistrust Sir Hugh, what confidence could I place in a woman who is nearly mad—the whole neighbourhood declare it."

"According to what such fools say, all the world is mad but themselves," said the miller, "but though the Lady Isabel has odd ways, to be sure, trust me, her head

is as clear as a judge's in the King's courts. She has known nothing but care and sorrow, ever since her husband brought her within his threshold; for the first night she arrived, Sir Ralph had well nigh killed his brother in her presence! Ah! he was a wicked man, and was ever at war with all his kindred and neighbours, till at last he cursed his own son, and the poor lady lost the only pleasure she had upon earth. Ah, sir, it was a sorrowful morning when I followed Master Reginald to the wars. Lady Isabel met us in the cold, grey twilight, down by St. Mark's well, and I shall never forget the scene that passed. pressed him again and again in her arms, but she spoke little, and never shed a tear, till at length, when I forced her son away, she fell as if an arrow had pierced her heart, stiff, and cold to the ground. ried to give her aid, and when she recovered her senses, and saw that he was gone, she made no lament. She arose calmly and solemnly, and went back to her home, like one who had no further business on earth. I have seen her since I returned—and she is just the same—like a spirit that walks the earth, impatient till its time of rest is come."

"You are blinded by old habits and feelings, Andrew," returned the priest, "but I have seen enough myself, to leave not a doubt on my mind, that the lady's intellect is too unsettled for her to be trusted with a secret of such vital importance."

"If you will needs have it so, holy father, I can say no more, and in truth it is now too late," was the miller's answer.

"We will trust in Providence," said the monk, "the judgment of man is ever prone to err. But it is time we thought of taking some repose, for I have a long journey to perform to-morrow. Let us say a short prayer, and then put out the light."

This done, the miller crept again into his dark resting place, whilst the monk, seating

himself on a block of wood beside the fire, and leaning back against the wall, with his arms crossed on his breast, soon sunk into a profound sleep

CHAPTER IV.

THE mind of Sir Hugh Collingwood was greatly perplexed and troubled; when, after leaving the mill, he retrod the forest paths. He had given the confessor many fair promises, though without the smallest intention of fulfilling any of them, and he had no sooner lost sight of the light in the hovel, than thoughts of the most evil character filled his brain.

There, alone, under the canopy of night,

alone in the deep, dark wood, with not a human eye to mark his deeds, fearful temptations assailed him. Evil spirits seemed to throng the air, and whisper words of flattering promise in his ear; evil spirits seemed to upbraid him for his momentary hesitation, and to nerve his hand, as he gathered his mantle in thick folds over the face of the sleeping child.

"Its cries shall not even reach the ears of the priest, though he follow in my track," he thought; but at that moment he heard, once more, the voice of his brother, as on the battle-field, calling in vain for mercy; he saw him raise his arms with a wild, imploring glance, and the fatal mantle fell from his grasp.

Hell yawned before him—the spectres of the past surrounded him with wild menaces of judgment, and the Knight, starting back from the impalpable visions, crossed his cold, damp forehead with trembling fingers, and murmured a pater noster.

This done, he stood a few minutes motion-

less, in the midst of the large forest; and fearful in the meanwhile, was the struggle between good and evil in his heart. The remembrance of his debts, his embarrassments, and the danger of his position, all thronged to his mind; but the form of his dying brother rose ever terrible and menacing before him, and he recoiled with horror from the commission of murder—a second murder.

The grey light of dawn was gleaming over the desolate plain, yet Sir Hugh, after long wandering about the woods uncertain in what manner to dispose of his helpless burthen, was still treading with hurried steps a lonely path over the moors; but no longer in hesitation and doubt.

His struggles were at an end—his plan was chosen, and a few minutes after sunrise, he stood with the infant, so enveloped in his mantle that no man could have guessed the nature of his burthen, under the stonearched porch of the Vicarage of the village of Bellinghem.

It was a small, low building, thatched with close shorn heath, the dark brown tint of which, was varied by the bright hues of the wild flowers and mosses, which had drank the dew, and blossomed in the sunbeams there, for more than a century. The Gothic windows, unlike those in the neighbouring cottages, of the peasantry, were glazed, and together with the little garden before the door, of cabbage and lettuce, intermingled with a few plants of rosemary and thyme, gave it an air of superior comfort and order.

The summons of the Knight, for admission, was speedily answered by the worthy Father Ambrose in person, who loudly expressed his astonishment, on the recognition of so unexpected a guest.

"It may happen, you may be more astonished when you learn my errand," answered Sir Hugh, "But are you alone? for I have a matter to confide to you that brooks no witnesses!"

"In truth it just so happens," answered the priest, "for my old housekeeper, Peggy,

♥OL. I.

has gone to nurse the shepherd's wife on the Broom hill, who is ill of a raging fever. But come in, Sir Hugh, it befitteth not for you to stand in the porch, when my poor dwelling is open to receive you," and he made way as he spoke, for his visiter to enter the cottage.

The Knight passed him in silence, into a low apartment, which to judge by the missal open on the table near the window, the culinary articles around the walls, and the porridge pot simmering above the wood fire, served the good priest in the double capacity of kitchen and study. A kind of ceiling was formed above the low rafters, by the boarded floor of the upper story, and dried simples and garden seeds hung suspended there, intermingled with pieces of smoked bacon, salmon and wild venison.

The vicar was a pale, middle sized man, about thirty, clothed in a long black gown; and his character was as simple as his dwelling. He was a good, pious, well meaning churchman, impressed with the truth of the

religion he professed, and ever anxious to fulfil its precepts. Ilis gentle soul knew no ambition, and contented in obscurity, without any superior talent or activity, he was beloved and respected by his neighbours, as a man who did no evil.

Thoroughly acquainted with his character, Sir Hugh was well aware, no criminal assistance could be expected from him, in his present embarrassment; and his plan was arranged accordingly.

"I have brought you a present, Father Ambrose," he said, ere he accepted the seat the priest had placed for him before the fire, "and though it is neither a fat buck, nor a Tweed salmon. I have still hope you will cherish it, for the sake of me, and mine."

"Can it be a young hound," returned his host.

"No, not a hound neither, but something ten times more troublesome, or a hundred times more precious, according as men are pleased to consider it. A child—a boy, Sir! a creature like ourselves, with a soul to be saved, and therefore I judge, in no hands can I place it better than in thine," and the Knight opened his mantle, and fully displayed his burthen.

"Sir Hugh, you astonish me!" exclaimed the vicar, as his eyes fell on the lovely infant.

"I thought men had ceased to be astonished in these wild times!" was his visiter's reply, "at least, I have, long ago. the object of my coming hither, Father Ambrose. Heavy trials and misfortunes have already robbed this child of a mother's care. It has strong claims on my protection and support; but my duties in the court, and the camp, and my unmarried state, render it impossible for me personally to fulfil the charge. I know no one to whom I can so conscientiously commit the direction of its education, as, yourself, and, confiding in your holy and benevolent character, I have come to request you, the confessor, and old friend of my family, to become the protector of this innocent and motherless babe."

"And its father lives?" demanded the priest with blushing cheeks.

"He has already confessed, and received full absolution," was the equivocal reply of the Knight, whilst he affected a confusion intended to convey a meaning very different from the truth, to his host. "We are all sinners, more or less, in this valley of darkness, Father Ambrose. Your pure soul can ill understand the temptations of a court, but your charity can pity and forgive the weak man who yields to them, in an evil moment for himself and others; and I feel certain, that now, when I am anxious to do all in my power, as an expiation of the past, by giving the child a religious education, and causing it to be brought up as a future servant of the church, you will not refuse to aid my well meant endeavours."

"It is a grave charge for a man, who like me, has no experience in such matters," returned Father Ambrose, with hesitation, "were it half a dozen years older—"

" Leave it till then in old Peggy's charge,

and I shall be content," was the answer, "it need give you little trouble, till it can read a Latin grammar."

- "And you wish it to be brought up to the Church?"
- "Yes, in good sooth, I would fain save it from its father's temptations, and moreover without acknowledged parents, the boy will be best in a monastery. Breed him up for a monk, Father Ambrose, in meekness and obedience, and I will engage to pay you a yearly stipend to indemnify you for all charges and trouble."
- "You are generous, Sir Hugh," returned the confessor, "but money is no object to me. If I knew more of the child's parentage—of any real necessity there exists for my adopting him—were I shown he had no relatives to whom of right this charge belonged."
- "Father Ambrose," said the knight, somewhat impatiently, "have I not already told you the mother is dead, whilst I, as its father's only representative, confide it to your

care. What shall I say further—it is painful to me to be more explicit—were I to tell you it is my own child, you could not refuse my prayer; and yet I have said almost as much."

- "Enough, Sir Knight;" answered the vicar. "If you will engage, on your honor, to provide for the future maintenance of the child, I ask no more questions, but promise at once to cherish it, as if it were my sister's son."
- "So let the world think it," returned Sir Hugh eagerly.
- "I will impose upon no man," said the priest.
- "Yet you will engage never to betray to any one, what I have now confided to you!"
- "I will not engage to be the keeper of any man's secrets, Sir Hugh; but without a moral necessity, I will betray no man's confidence," and with this assurance, the Knight was compelled to be content, after many vain efforts to wring a more solemn promise of silence from his host. Convinced however of the virtuous and un-

loquacious character of the confessor, he felt his mind relieved from a heavy load of care.

"The boy is baptized," he said, ere he departed, "and let him for the future be called by the name of Hubert Saville. I depart tomorrow for the court, Father Ambrose, but in any case of necessity you can always write to me there. The money shall not fail to be regularly paid, and be assured, I shall ever remain grateful for your ready compliance with my wishes. Farewell," and impatient of further delay, he hurried down the garden, and by the least frequented paths, regained the secret passage to his chamber.

An hour later, and Father Christopher, the stranger monk, found, and recognized the infant in the vicarage; but though he quickly gleaned enough from his unsuspicious host, fully to understand the story which had been imposed upon him, not in the least degree did he betray his previous and better knowledge of the boy's history.

Secretly rejoiced that the babe had found a home under the roof of so worthy and pious a man, he ere long left the north, to await with patience those political changes, he felt no doubt would one day arrive, before which, he well knew, there was no hope that his young charge could ever regain the inheritance of his father.

CHAPTER V.

YEARS passed away after Hubert Saville was placed with the good vicar of Bellinghem, and the public affairs of England and the private interests of its inhabitants, underwent many, and important changes, as the boy grew up towards manhood.

The unsuccessful rising of the Earl of Warwick, ended in his destruction, and the discredit of all his family and adherents, Henry the Sixth and his unfortunate son both fell into the grave, and Edward the Fourth was firmly seated on the throne. The open, civil warfare was for a time appeased, which had so long devastated the whole kingdom, brought down the proud and the rich, like ripe corn before the sickle, to the earth, swept away many of the noblest families from the land, choked the charnel houses with the poor, and left the needy peasants and artisans in such misery, that they envied rather than mourned the dead.

A great whirlwind had swept over the whole surface of society, and the most eminent had been borne down, to learn, in the abject depths of misery and want, what they might never else have known—the sufferings common to the great body of the poor, honest, labouring Englishmen, under the pressure of feudal power. But none of the poor had risen; none of their causes of complaint had been done away with. The war had been a war of ambitious factions and jealous nobility, teo powerful to be kept under wholesome re-

straint by a feeble-minded monarch, whilst they were too accustomed to commotion, and rapine, and intrigue, and too proud to submit, at first, tranquilly to the dominion of his succesor, Edward, who, once their equal, had been raised by their own efforts to the throne.

But at length, when the struggle appeared over, those who remembered England before the rebellion, were convinced that years must elapse ere the kingdom was again as prosperous, as in those tranquil days. merchant felt it would be long till credit could be restored, till a home-demand for his manufactures again revived; the farmer deplored the past when he thought of the numerous seasons that must pass away, before his neglected lands could be brought, by patient toil, to yield such cropsas formerly and the poor peasant, whilst he again tilled his little garden plot, had no hope to see, in his own time, his burnt and blackened orchard, bending with the golden fruits of autumn.

• Yet though not apparent in the first lull of repose, the lower and middle classes had won inestimable advantages from this long, civil war. The power of the innumerable feudal tyrants, which had so long distracted the land, was broken down; their property, in many cases, had passed into the hands of traders, and thence circulated amongst society; their strong arm was crushed, and the influence of the crown and the authority of law, strengthened; whilst the way was opened for many of those wise, though unpopular acts, by which King Henry the Seventh subsequently established the repose of the kingdom on a lasting and solid foundation.

Edward the Fourth was a friend to the merchants, from whom his extravagance kept him in perpetual need of loans, but his passion was pleasure, and weary of contentions and strife, he, on the return of peace, eagerly indulged his natural propensity for sensual and luxurious indulgences, without paying much heed to the wants, or wishes of his people. Factions and jealousies divided.

his court, especially between his brothers the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, and the relatives of his Queen, Elizabeth Grey; but as long as they led to no acts of violent and open hostility, he left them to take their course, and continued his amours and revels, with a tranquil indifference as to the past, the present, and the future.

Sir Hugh Collingwood, after the conclusion of the war, had been enabled by his marriage with the wealthy heiress of a rich, city trader, to maintain his place at the court, and to share in its dissipations. His wife, after having given birth to a daughter, died ere they had been married a year, and the Knight, rejoiced to be once more released from all restraint, laid her corpse with due honours in his family vault, and left his child under his mother's care, to be nursed by the wife of an honest peasant in the village of Bellinghem.

This made, at first, no change in the habits of the Lady Isabel; she did not love her granddaughter, but she resolved to do her duty towards the babe. It was daily brought to her at the Manor House, that she might be assured of its health, though till it was more than two years old, she scarcely seemed to notice its beauty. But when it began to speak, when it knew her, when it ran towards her with a laugh of joyful recognition, and lisped her name in broken accents, her stern heart was touched; and forgetting the father as she gazed upon the innocent child, by imperceptible degrees, it unconsciously won a place in a heart that had seemed long closed against all human affection.

As the young Ellen grew older, she was the frequent companion of her grandmother's solitude, and the partner of her rambles, though on the other hand, often utterly forgotten by Lady Isabel, she was left for days together, to sport at pleasure with her young companions on the village green. And here the little girl was ever the happiest and the gayest; for the love her grandmother bore her, was not sufficiently strong to change

her cold, stern manner, and at six years old, Ellen daily feared her, more, and more. It was with a sad heart the little creature left her sport, to be the companion of her walk, when the lady, on a bright, spring day, wandered forth by the side of the mountain stream. Nature, awakening from the long slumber of winter, appeared all fresh and sparkling, like the first hopes of youth, and Lady Isabel, seating herself, on the moss grown stump of an elm root, left the child free to sport at her pleasure, with the wild flowers and the white pebbles by the water side.

To and fro Ellen ran with bursts of sweet laughter; a music that belongs to infancy, and tells to aged hearts, the mystery of the vanished paradise in which their young souls once abode. The broken-hearted mother heard it not unmoved; she gazed with fixed, sad eyes upon the sportive creature, and there arose before her, as from the tomb of the past, her own young Reginald; bright, joyous, and beautiful as a

cherub, radiant with hope, and innocence, and love.

For the first time, she caught the little girl in her arms, and kissed her; then holding her at arm's length, she gazed wildly and sadly upon her. Large tears chased each other down her furrowed cheeks, till at length, yielding to all the early softness of her nature, she covered her face with her hands, and wept as she had never done since the sad day she bade her son farewell.

Her momentary vision of heaven had vanished, and she felt, with redoubled agony, that the past is irretrievable upon earth. Yet the dream, as it passed, had, like a touch of electricity, revived her palsied heart. The apathy of despair which had long been stealing over her, dissolved into a wild burst of female tenderness.

The young Ellen, unconscious of the agony she had excited, half in wonder, half in terror, crept close to the lady's side to watch her tears, till, at length, seeing one of her village play-fellows, a boy about three years

older than herself, gathering nuts on the bank above, she crept away, and taking him by the hand, with a whispered order to be silent, she led him softly to the lady's side.

The children understood nothing of the sufferings they gazed upon, yet there is a sublimity in an uncontrolled manifestation of overwhelming passion, which awed even their young hearts.

"Darkness, darkness, eternal darkness!" murmured Lady Isabel at length, without taking her hands from her face, and unconscious of her childish listeners. "All gleams of light on this side the grave, to me are but delusions."

The little girl looked up in her companion's face, as if to know if she might laugh, but he kept her silent by a glance of authority, and as the lady once more burst into a violent passion of tears, he ventured, though timidly, to bid her weep no more.

Startled by an address so unexpected, startled yet more by the tone of voice in

which the words were pronounced, Lady Isabel at once checked her grief, and turned with inquiring eyes towards the speaker. Was it an apparition that stood before her, had her thought taken form and substance, or the past given back its shadows, to people the present with reality? or was that bright and noble boy, with the wind playing amongst the curls that clustered round his rosy cheeks, and tears shadowing the lustre of his deep, dark eyes, a mere creation of her own overwrought brain? All these ideas, bordering on insanity, flitted for a moment athwart her mind, and then a wild hope, once fondly cherished when other hopes had passed away, darted through her heart. Grasping the boy convulsively by the arm, she demanded his name, in almost inarticulate accents.

"Hubert Saville," he replied in the same sweet voice, which had before so powerfully excited her wonder; and though the large, black, piercing eyes of the Lady of the Manor, the terror of all his young companions, were fixed upon him with a searching glance, that might have dismayed many an aged wight, his little heart was too full of sympathy for her grief, to have any thought of fear.

"Hubert Saville! that is no village name! Whence come you child?" she demanded.

"I live with Father Ambrose the vicar," was the boy's reply, and the accent in which it was pronounced, left no doubt that he had at least been educated in the north.

"Are you his scholar?" inquired the lady.

"His scholar and his nephew," was the answer. "Old Peggy was my nurse, but now I learn latin, and Father Ambrose is teaching me to be a priest," and he raised his young blooming head, with the proud consciousness, that he had already risen a step on the ladder of honor.

"Thou a priest! my poor boy!" returned Lady Isabel, "but I must inquire further into this. I will go with thee to Father Ambrose," and taking the boy in one hand, and her granddaughter in the other, she led them in silence to the Vicarage.

The little Ellen laughed and danced with childish glee, often glancing, past her grandmother, at her favourite playfellow, Hubert; but for the first time, he heeded her not. The eyes of the boy were fixed on the wildly agitated countenance of his guide, who seemed, as she glided on between these two personifications of Hope and Love, like a Sybil holding converse with unseen spirits. Though the visions that passed before the lady, were unknown to Hubert, though he was even unconscious of the thoughts of his own brain, yet the whole scene was an epoch in the life of the child's mind. He saw and felt things of which he had never before dreamt, amidst the sunny fancies of his boyish sports; the sorrow he understood not, the solemn grandeur of Lady Isabel's bearing, which he could only dimly appreciate, awakened, nevertheless, feelings of sympathy and reverence in his young heart, and an unconscious longing for unknown things, and secrets of joy and wonder.

It is a moment of rapture—a pleasure of

which the old forget to take account, when as the folded leaves of the young bud first feel the warmth of the sun, the heart of the child first expands in the glow of those etherial beams of feeling and intellect, which passing from spirit to spirit, develop the innate energy of his soul, awaken it to a dim perception of the mysteries by which it is surrounded, and excite hitherto unknown sensations of curiosity, astonishment and awe.

Lady Isabel turned from time to time to gaze on her young companion with looks of love, but she spoke not, till having passed the vicar's garden, she found the priest sitting in the shadow of his old stone porch, reading a huge wooden bound MS. of one of the Fathers.

"Good morrow, my worthy friend," she said, startling the good man from his studies, by her deep, sad voice, as she stopped suddenly before him, and pointed to the young Hubert, "know you ought of that boy? Is it true that he is a dweller beneath your

- "Most certainly, my Lady," answered the vicar rising with respect. "If you came more into the village, you had probably known this ere now, for it is eight years since he was placed under my care."
- "Eight years!" she exclaimed. "May I ask if his parents are living?"
- "His mother was an unfortunate creature, who perished at his birth," said the priest.
- "And his father?" demanded the lady, with trembling lips.
- "Could not acknowledge him as his child; yet anxious to make all the reparation in his power, for an act of youthful folly, placed the boy with me, to give him a pious and virtuous education as a priest.
- "You know then, that his father lives?" was her eager demand; but neither she, nor the vicar remarked, with what an expression of anxiety the boy fixed his eyes upon him, as he replied, "Yes, he lives, but his name I am bound to keep secret. The support he affords his child, is given only on that condition."

Lady Isabel sighed deeply. The priest's answers were not such as she had longed, nay, almost trusted to hear. They were too simple, too direct, to afford any foundation for the wild hopes she desired to cherish, and she sighed, that this first light which had glimmered on her path for years, was thus so soon extinguished.

"But if I have a father, why does he never come to see me? he does not love me, that is plain—nobody loves poor Hubert," said the boy, looking anxiously up in the priest's face.

The touching tone of longing tenderness in which these words were uttered, and the mournful picture they pourtrayed, of the loneliness of the deserted child, sank deep into the heart of Lady Isabel. The voice, was the same familiar voice, which had before attracted her attention, and the words recalled times of sorrow to her mind, greater grief had failed to obliterate. "Poor child," she murmured, as she laid her hand

upon his curled head, "so young and so forlorn!"

"In truth, madam," said Father Ambrose gravely, "the boy has no cause to complain. Old Peggy has been a careful nurse to him, and he has never been treated with severity. nor wanted for anything under my roof." And the worthy man spoke the truth; but Peggy, though honest, was an old spinster, who had fulfilled her duty, without the smallest touch of motherly softness, of which in truth her rough nature was incapable; whilst the priest himself, absorded in studies, thought all was right, when the boy was healthy By nature calm and placid, he and clean. knew nothing of the deep longings for affection, in the heart of a child of ardent and loving temperament; of the silent gloom which sometimes saddened his sports, when he saw that all his young companions had parents, or kindred, to cling to, save himself.

Lady Isabel, from her own sad experience, at once comprehended the boy's secret sorrow, when she heard his question to the priest,

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and from that moment her heart clung to him with unspeakable affection. She felt that there was a bond of sympathy between the deserted child, and the bereaved mother. The wizard's wand had touched the rock, and a fresh spring of charity and love gushed forth in that heart, where all had long been frozen. Her hour of desolation was past—she had found a new interest upon earth.

Ere she left the priest's dwelling, she obtained his permission for the boy to visit her in all his vacant hours. Hubert, rejoicing in his new found friend, would gladly have returned with her to her dwelling, had not the vicar's commands compelled him to wish her and his playmate, Ellen, an unwilling farewell, and remain to resume his interrupted lessons.

But scarcely had he finished his task on the morrow, ere he was to be seen bounding over the village green, and along the banks of the stream, and across the heath-covered hills, to the lonely dwelling of Lady Isabel. In that dreary abode, which all others shunned, there was an irresistible attraction to him; and day after day, during the long summer, he trod the same path, and when the autumn faded, and the snow covered the hills, it was still the same. Often when the old peasants saw his little footsteps, like the track of a hare, upon the snow, they crossed themselves, and with a dark look towards the manor house, murmured something about witchcraft; but old Hannah, the lady's faithful servant, laughed at such wild fancies, and was joyful to see that her mistress was less wild and restless, and would often sit peacefully for days together by the cheerful fire, relating to Hubert the legends of that land of war, and poetry, and romance; or instilling into his young mind, those high lessons of religion and morality, which the scholastic, verbal and tedious instructions of Father Ambrose failed to convey.

The happiness of the boy at these times was complete. Every word his benefactress uttered, opened to him new worlds of wonder and beauty. Her powerful imagination infused a mysterious charm into all her narratives; and more than all, he felt that a mother's love breathed in her every word; and the charm of female tenderness, penetrated to the very depths of his young heart, and bound him to her with the devotion of a son. Willingly would he have given his life, at any moment, in defence of her, whom all others feared; and with a comprehension, beyond his years, he soon learnt how much she had need of his love.

He heard the sad story of her son from old Hannah, and no longer wondering at the fits of sad abstraction, which still, from time to time, like a dark cloud, passed over her, he strove with simple guile to divert her thoughts as much as possible from the causes of her sorrow. Her little grandchild, Ellen, was still his favourite playmate, and he often led her from her nurse to the manor house, to share with him the lady's love, and hand in hand the two children came with joyous hearts to the old, dark dwelling, as to a fairy

palace, where none had permission to enter save themselves. Like angel visitants, their presence brought a blessing to the place where they abided, and the Demon of Despair, fled before the spirits of Innocence and Love, and youthful joy.

When the spring came, and daisies and buttercups bespangled the grassy knolls, Lady Isabel often wandered with the children for hours in the sunshine, amidst the yellow flowering furze, recounting tales of the misfortunes of Henry the Sixth and his son, till the heart of Hubert, excited by her enthusiastic language, throbbed to avenge their wrongs, and win for himself the name and honors, his parents had so cruelly denied It was this the lady loved to see! was then she seemed again to behold her young Reginald before her, with all bright aspirations for glory and chivalry! But when she remembered how they had all faded, and dropped without fruit, into the graveof oblivion, she wept over the frailty of human hopes; and with a sad presentiment,

that such might likewise be the destiny of the young creature before her, who yet unconscious of the blight that hovers over all earthly desires, was still so strong and happy in his ignorance.

The little Ellen, though she feared her grandmother more than Hubert, loved her not less, and won by her ready obedience to her slightest wishes, Lady Isabel, in spite of her anger towards Sir Hugh, became by degrees fondly attached to his gentle girl, till at length she wrote to the Knight, who was ever absent in court and camp, to request that she might take Ellen from her village nurse, and bring her up under her own roof.

This unexpected proposition was most acceptable to Sir Hugh, who once more involved in difficulties by his extravagance, had ever an eye on his mother's daily accumulating wealth. His consent to her demand was therefore quickly and joyfully given, with the most agreeable anticipations of future riches. Had he known of his mother's af-

fection for Hubert, and the childish love already existing between Ellen and her playfellow, he might perhaps have returned a very different answer to Lady Isabel's proposition.

But if he was ignorant of what was passing at the Manor House, there were others who watched with pleasure, the calm, slow progress of events, which time and Providence were bringing there to completion. Father Christopher had not forgotten the child he had confided to the care of Sir Hugh Colling-By the agency of the trusty miller, he knew all that befel him, and contented. for the time, with the education he received, he left the Knight without question, or remonstrance, to pursue the course he had It was with great satisfaction he chosen. heard of Lady Isabel's attachment to the boy, and of the favourable effect apparently produced on her mind, by this new object of interest. Once or twice, when he secretly visited the north, the miller renewed his exmest instances for him to confide the secret

of the child's birth to the Lady of the manor, but on this point the confessor was The subject was of too vital inexorable. importance, he persisted, to be lightly dealt with, and though her mind might have, in some degree, recovered its tranquillity, he dreaded lest any violent excitement, should again deprive her of the command over her passions and faculties, and rob her of the exercise of the clear, calm judgment, so necessary to direct her conduct, were she made a confidante of his counsels. dence has its own times and ways," he added. "All is now going on well, and let no imprudent act of ours, snap the chain of events, on the tranquil progress of which, in all probability, the future prosperity of the boy depends. Be watchful and discreet give me timely notice of every change that occurs, and, in time of need, I shall be ever ready to act with promptitude and decision. Meanwhile, let the fruit ripen undisturbed.

Years thus passed away, the attachment

of Lady Isabel to her young favourite became gradually stronger and stronger, whilst the devotion of Hubert to his benefactress, assumed, with his ripening intelligence, a more profound and earnest character, and the gentle love, with which he had from infancy regarded her granddaughter, Ellen Collingwood, deepened into a passion the most He forgot, in the bright ardent and intense. dreams this feeling excited in his heart, that he was destined to take the priestly vows of celibacy'; he forgot that Ellen was the heiress of an old, distinguished and wealthy family, whilst his own birth was involved in mystery; he forgot all but the fair, innocent being, who like a flower had grown lovely and pure by his side; and yet, unconscious of the nature of his feelings, he had no apprehension of the trials and sufferings which might emanate from their indulgence. Society, and its endless gradations of rank and proud distinctions, were still a mystery to him. Ellen and Lady Isabel werè his world; he knew of no other, he had never known another, and no doubts

for long crossed his mind, that the love of either could prove a source of sorrow and misfortune. The passing hours were too bright in their presence; their society was too necessary to his existence, for him to imagine, for a moment, that such joy could bear a future harvest of agony and despair.

The first blow which dispelled this de-

lusion, and clouded the bright sunshine of his young heart, was the removal of Ellen, at the age of sixteen, from her grandmother's dwelling. It was time, Sir Hugh said, that her manners should be formed by a court life; and his interest sufficed to place her about the person of the Queen. proud of her beauty, he indulged the most ambitious hopes of her making a noble alliance, and was deaf to all her entreaties, to remain at the manor house, where she had spent so many happy years. Lady Isabel disdained to interfere in any of the affairs And though sorry to part of her son. with Ellen, she made no opposition to her removal. The agony of the young people at this separation, first taught them how dear they were to each other, and whilst the girl bore with her to the court a remembrance which its gaieties could not obliterate from her heart, Hubert remained to mourn, in solitude, over visions he had at length learnt were too bright to be realized. But his uncommunicated sorrow strengthened and matured his mind, and by daily commune with his own thoughts, he acquired a force and energy of character. that prepared him well to encounter the more active troubles and trials of life.

CHAPTER VI.

EDWARD the FOURTH died of a short illness, A. D. 1843, and after the murder of his two sons, Edward the Fifth, and the young Duke of York, in the Tower, their uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, usurped the crown, with the title of Richard the Third.

Though he endeavoured to secure his possession of the sovereign power, by the sacrifice of his brother's family, the relations of the widowed Queen, Elizabeth Grey, and all who appeared likely to dispute his usurped

authority, though the rebellion of the Duke of Buckingham had been suppressed, and that nobleman and many others brought to the scaffold, a silent feeling of discontent was well known to exist amongst the nobility; whilst the murmurs of the middle and lower ranks were ominous of further changes.

The repeated demands made on the City and the wealthiest of its inhabitants, by the family of York, alarmed many prudent men, and amongst others, Sir Hugh Collingwood.

No longer attracted by the gay pleasures of a jovial court, he began to think it was more for his interest, to return to his northern estates, and keep an eye on his tenants and retainers, than to incur the risk, in London, of being forced a second time, to contribute to a royal loan.

It was in the month of March, 1485, that the domestics of Ellington Tower, received orders to have all in readiness for the reception of their master, and the guests he purposed to bring with him on the following day.

This news was far from welcome to Lady Isabel. She dreaded a renewal of the same painful scenes with her son, which had preceded his departure, being still resolved, to withhold from him the objects of his cupidity; for she remained as uncertain as ever, with regard to the fate of her first-born. She dreaded that his presence would prove an interruption to the peaceful tenour of her association with Hubert, which, though not actual happiness, more nearly resembled it, than anything she had for many years experienced. She was not blind to the young man's ardent attachment to her granddaughter, and dark presentiments came over her mind, that the presence of Sir Hugh would prove as fatal to Hubert's good fortune, as it had formerly done to that of her son Reginald.

On the young man himself, the intelligence fell like a stroke of lightning. He was sitting in the Vicar's kitchen, putting the last touches to a beautiful MS. he had been employed to copy for the monastery of Alnwick, when the priest returned from the village, and abruptly announced the expected arrival of Sir Hugh Collingwood.

"I rejoice at it, Hubert, for your sake," he added, "for I trust there will now, no longer be any obstacle to your taking the monk's frock. I have done my part towards you faithfully; you are not deficient in learning, and as your future life is to be devoted to the church, it is time some further steps were taken."

"And who hath the right to decide that my future life is to be devoted to the church, without consulting my inclinations?" demanded the youth, casting away his pen, with burning cheek, and flashing eye.

"Those who have been at the expense of your maintenance and instruction, from your infancy," was the reply.

"And who are they?" was Hubert's haughty inquiry.

"Your best friends, who have been unwearied in their endeavours to secure for you a virtuous and honorable education, and position in life."

"Methought I was your nephew, and to you alone my gratitude was due!" exclaimed the young man with astonishment.

"But I am poor, and powerless," returned the vicar, greatly embarrassed by this observation, "and had need of help to fulfil the task I had undertaken. The servants of the church lack the means to provide for other men's children, and I tell you plainly, you are more indebted to others than to me, and to those whose slightest wishes it is your duty to obey."

"But their names, Father Ambrose—their names?" was Hubert's impatient rejoinder.

"A solemn promise of secrecy on that score, seals my lips," said the vicar.

"If such be the case," replied the youth,
"to these unknown beings I can owe no obedience; nay more—were all this paltry
mystery at an end, and I stood face to face
with these powerful, these generous protec-

tors, I would prove to them, that when they thought to purchase dominion over a human soul by food, and clothing, and book learning, they lacked the means to make their contract binding. For their food, and their clothing, I thank them-for their book learning—I accept it for as much as it is worth, and have already paid for it threefold, by the manuscripts I have copied at your command; but as for their monk's frock, I reject it, with all their mysterious patronage, for the present, and the future, if the price of their favour be, that I forswear the world, and consent to be buried for the remainder of my existence in a cloister."

"Young man," said the priest solemnly, "mar not your fortunes by this headstrong folly. I trusted the care I bestowed on your education, would have brought forth better fruit."

"You trusted that I should be a willing slave, Father Ambrose! Is it not so?" answered the youth bitterly. "But you have deceived yourself! I have long suspected I

was not your nephew, and whoever my parents may be, whatever great wrong they may have done me, that they fear to meet their offspring face to face, neither you, nor they, have, by the mercy of heaven, had power to rob me of a strong arm and an independent spirit! No force on earth shall compel me to become a priest."

"Then, young man, you must starve," was the vicar's reply. "I will never maintain you in disobedience; and from the moment I announce this decision to your patron, the pension he has hitherto paid me, for your support, will be withdrawn."

"And I shall rejoice at it!" answered Hubert, "for whilst I have health and strength, I trust, by the mercy of Heaven, I have no need of such a paltry pittance! and that I shall never be tempted to sell my liberty, my life, my soul, for food and raiment! You seem to forget, Father Ambrose, the sums you have been paid for the manuscripts I have for the last five years had some skill in copying. I can still pursue the

trade, and provide by my own labour, for my own support!"

"Young man, it was to your patron you were indebted for this employment," said the "when you refuse to priest solemnly; become a monk, those for whom you have hitherto worked, will cease to give you occupation. You have yet to learn that strong and independent as you may feel, you are but a grain of sand on the face of the earth! No man has need of you; you belong to no man; and when you refuse the friendly offers of the sole being who takes an interest in your welfare; when you reject the place in society to which by his bounty he would kindly raise you, you must, without kindred, or money, for ever remain a poor vagabond, to be tossed about to and fro, at the mercy. of fortune, on the troubled ocean of life."

"And who is this noble friend, who refuses, to an unoffending being, even the knowledge of his birth—who robs him of kindred, who denies him the birthright of the meanest beggar, and then demands his honor

and obedience—nay, even the sacrifice of liberty, and all his hopes on earth, in return for a paltry pittance he has unwillingly doled out?"

"It is well I am the only witness of this insolent language!" said Father Ambrose.

"I would that he himself had heard it," "The truth for once returned the youth. had then reached his ears! and in this matter it is needless to temporise, for repeat, once for all, holy Father, that I will die sooner than become a monk. If he who has hitherto protected me, will, after you have informed him of my resolution, consent to aid me to push my fortunes in the world, I will await his pleasure! if not, this inactive life must quickly have an end, and I must hasten hence to busier scenes, where haply my poor strength may yet avail, in defiance of your prognostications, to win me an honourable livelihood, and the reputable position in society, of which others have denied me. He who depends entirely on

himself, has, methinks, powerful motives for

activity, which are wanting to the contented child of luxury, on whom fortune smiles from the moment of his birth; and I feel that such strong impulses insure their own reward."

"Of your patron's approbation of such wild schemes, I can give you small hope," returned Father Ambrose. "He is a man of the world, and knows full well, that youth thinks all things possible, yet needs the sober hand of age to guide its fiery paces safely through life's dangerous paths. Moreover, he is a firm man, unused to opposition, and who brooks it not—least of all from his dependents."

"Just heaven! and have I lived to hear myself thus classed with grooms and lacqueys!" exclaimed the indignant youth. "This must be no longer endured! If others owe me no regard, yet, whilst I live, I will, at least, retain the right to respect myself. Father Ambrose, the die is cast! the bond which united us is broken! I thank you for the learning you have given me, I

thank you for your nourishment, and the kindness you have hitherto shown me; and I grieve that it is beyond my power, now at least, to requite you for either; but I swear most solemnly, that had I known that each and all were bestowed as wages slavery, to crush me into base subjection, I long ago had fled the vile contamination of such degrading benefits, and sought my living like the wild hare upon the mountain, rather than continue to owe it to a bounty so humiliating. But the time has now come, and be it for honor, or be it for ruin, I cast off these trammels. I will release you from all further responsibility, and take the charge of my own fortunes, under heaven's blessing, henceforward on myself alone."

"There is no need for such precipitation, young man," said his perplexed listener, "I meant not to wound your feelings, and methinks, I told you nothing new, when I said that the needy are dependent on the great. Take time to consider this matter maturely. It is always too soon to mar your own for-

tunes; your patron may prove less obdurate than I fear—some other path to honor, besides the church, may be found. In truth, your passionate language has taken me so by surprise, I know not what to say—but now Sir Hugh has arrived."

"Sir Hugh, Father Ambrose!" exclaimed the young man, "by heaven, is it possible that Sir Hugh has aught to do with this mystery?"

"Holy Mary, keep and protect me," murmured the priest, crossing himself, "this boy will drive me distracted. Sir Hugh, indeed! Learn humility, young man, for in truth it seems you are sadly puffed up with pride and pretension, when you fancy that a wealthy and honorable knight, of King Edward the Fourth's own bed-chamber, hath ought to do with a poor, nameless youth like you—save in the way of charity—which, had you waited patiently, I was about to explain. I would have said, I meant to beg for you—"

"I thank you, sir! but I neither desire,

nor will accept the charity of Sir Hugh Collingwood. If I have need of aid, his mother is my friend."

"The poor, mad lady is like to prove a most efficient friend, in good truth!" was the Vicar's sneering reply. "She has interest at court, and can help an ambitious youth to preferment; she has a clear judgment, and can counsel him discreetly; she has large experience, and can guide him in the way he should go."

"Take heed, Father Ambrose, how you speak lightly of the Lady Isabel," said Hubert with a stern countenance, which more than ever astonished the priest, who was as utterly ignorant of the character of the youth he had educated, as of that of an infant on the village green. "I may feel bound by duty to bear personal insults from your lips with patience, but no man shall say aught to the discredit of that noble lady in my presence, with impunity."

"In the name of all the saints, what makes thee so fiery and unreasonable this

morning?" demanded the Vicar, "a worl spoken in jest can give no man nor woman either, cause for offence; and there is, methinks, little need for you to defend the honor of the Lady Isabel Collingwood in my presence, who have been confessor to the family for the last five and twenty years, and knew and honored her before you were A pretty story in truth, that I am not to be permitted to speak a word this morning, but you, a stripling, must call me to account. Go, and con over your Greek, testament, it will profit you more than such idle bickering."

- "Father Ambrose, I am no longer a child; my resolutions are not thus lightly to be turned aside," returned the youth. "I pray you to consider what I have said."
- "As mere boyish folly, which you will do well to forget as soon as possible," said the priest, arising to leave the apartment.
- "This advice comes now too late, and to-morrow," exclaimed Hubert following him VOL. L G

rapidly towards the inner room. But the priest, anxious to end a discourse which placed him in a position the most embarrassing, shut the door in his face, and turned the key in the inside, flattering himself that he had thus obtained sufficient time to consult Sir Hugh as to the course necessary to be pursued with a headstrong youth whom he clearly perceived was far beyond his management.

CHAPTER VII.

Indignation was the predominant feeling of Hubert, when he found himself thus left alone in the middle of the Vicar's kitchen—indignation, that what he considered his just rights were thus spurned and treated with disdain by the feeble priest, whom he involuntarily despised. But his anger was like a spring tempest, brief, though violent; and a short time only elapsed, ere he smiled, in turn, at his own weakness; and then, with a

deep sigh, he turned and left the cottage. He thought of the probability that Ellen Collingwood might return with her father, at the very time when a hard necessity compelled him to depart, and this hope, which had been his only consolation since her departure, now drove him nearly to distraction.

What a countless train of thoughts passed athwart his brain! what a stinging perception of the agonies which the stern laws of society can inflict upon its outcasts—what a revelation of the boundless tyranny of pride and wealth, and of the tortures the heartless can inflict, for the first time burst, like evil demons, amidst his fair young dreams! The spirit of evil—the tempter—the blighter—the destroyer—stood for the first time palpably amidst the flowers of his untrodden Eden, and the blossoms withered and died in his sight, and gloom and desolation spread over the ruined Paradise!

But the gloomy vision was brief! he passed with rapid step from the village, he ascended

the broom covered hills, the clouds rushed joyously along the clear blue heaven, the fragrant breeze of the spring blew fresh on his burning brow, like a living spirit, and the darkness passed away from his soul, and he saw only the form of Ellen smiling on him through the floating mists of the future. Scarcely conscious whither he went, in the unusual agitation of his mind, though he directed his way towards the Manor House, his proud heart shrunk from disclosing the difficulty of his position to Lady Isabel. felt that to speak of his resolution, to depart in search of fortune, was to demand her bounty, and deeply grateful for all the sympathy she had shewn him, for all the knowledge of the world her lessons had imparted to him, he was resolved rather to commence his travels penniless, than even by implication to seek pecuniary aid from her. he felt he needed the consolation of love; and by a natural instinct he turned towards her dwelling.

He had proceeded more than half the way

thither, and was passing along a steep precipice above the winding stream of the valley, when he heard the approaching sound of horses, and on turning hastily round a projecting mass of rock, so as to quit a bye path for the open road, he came suddenly almost in front of a lady and gentleman who, well mounted, were proceeding in the same direction as himself.

He had scarcely time to see that the cavalier was a middle-sized, dark man, richly attired in the fashion of the court, and that the female who accompanied him wore a small, black velvet mask, ere a favorite dog that had followed him from the village sprang from the copse, and commenced barking furiously at the horse of the courtier. The startled animal reared and backed towards the edge of the precipice, at a point where it was more than sixty feet high, so as at the same time to force behind it, the steed of the lady, to the very brink of the abyss. Hubert saw at a glance that all her efforts to govern the animal she rode were unavailing,

whilst the horse of her companion pressed so closely upon her as to prevent the possibility of her escape, unaided, from her dangerous position. He heard with agony a faint cry burst from her lips, when the crumbling earth gave way beneath the hind feet of her gelding, and rushing towards her, at imminent peril of his life, he seized and hung on it by the bridle with one arm, whilst with the other he struck the charger of the courtier repeatedly on the haunches with a willow wand he carried, till it sprang forward a few paces, and left the narrow road once more open.

Yet even then it seemed for a moment doubtful whether the horse of the lady might not lose its balance, and roll backwards with its rider, in its wild efforts to recover its footing on solid ground; but Hubert still retained his presence of mind, and dragging it forward with the whole strength of his powerful and athletic person, aided by his arm, and cheered by his voice, it gave one more desperate plunge, regained the middle of the

road, and saved itself and its rider from certain destruction.

To bring the animal as far as possible from the edge of the precipice it had escaped, Hubert, still holding its head, clambered up on to the root of an old oak tree that overhung the road from the bank above, and the lady, apparently trusting herself entirely to his guidance and protection, made no effort to proceed further, but bending over the neck of her horse, endeavoured to soothe its terrors by her gentle caresses.

But Hubert observed her not; his first impulse, when he saw her in safety, was to turn anxiously to ascertain the result of the combat between the courtier and his fright-ened charger. It was already at an end, and the stranger fiercely saluted him with a volley of maledictions and abuse, and riding close up to the hanging bank, his whip was in another moment raised, with loud threats of vengeance, against the involuntary cause of his danger.

The youth's quick eye no sooner marked the movement, than springing up the rock so as to be on a level with the upraised arm of his assailant, he wrenched the weapon from his grasp, and flung it with an exclamation of disdain far over the precipice.

"The next time," he cried, "that you dare to lift your whip against a free-born Englishman, I advise you to take heed it falls not on your own shoulders, as but for my forbearance, it would now have done!"

"We shall meet again ere long, I trust," answered the stranger, "and then, by all the saints, thou insolent variet, thou shalt feel it over thy shoulders, as sure as a thief at Tyburn!"

"Meanwhile you had better look for it amongst the brambles," answered Hubert with a laugh of inexpressible scorn, which to his astonishment was echoed by the soft musical voice of the lady, who still reined in her horse, only a few paces distant, as if awaiting her companion.

She was attired in a long, flowing riding

gown of claret coloured stuff, edged with gold embroidery, which displayed her slender, but beautifully modelled form, to the utmost advantage. Her large, black velvet hat was ornamented with a single white feather, and she wore a pair of white, open leathern gauntlets, so long as to cover nearly half her arm. The easy grace with which she held in the animal she rode, and above all, the musical laugh which drew Hubert's attention to this lovely apparition, rendered the mask that concealed her features doubly tantalising to his curiosity.

When the angry cavalier who escorted her rode away, the lady, as if enjoying Hubert's wonder, kissed her hand, and waved it towards him, and then, perceiving that her companion's back was towards them, as he spurred his horse rapidly down the valley, she for a moment withdrew the skreen from her face. Great was the astonishment of the youth, when the features of Ellen Collingwood were thus displayed to him; those features which had haunted him since her

departure by day and by night, sometimes like a messenger of despair filling his soul with sadness; at others bright and sparkling as he then saw them, telling of nothing but hope and joy. Yes, it was Ellen! but though the same, how changed! how doubly beautiful in the young perfection of womanhood!

In defiance of her admonition he was on the point of bursting into a wild expression of rapture, when she checked him by lifting her whip in playful menace; then quickly replacing her mask, she urged her horse as close as possible under the bank where he stood, and said in a deep, clear voice,

"Remember for the future, when we meet we must appear unknown to each other!" then once more waving her hand, she put her horse into a quick canter, and was lost in the shadows of the wood, ere Hubert had recovered from his surprise, or fully comprehended the meaning of her words.

For a moment he stood immoveable, stunned by this brief adventure; then

catching flitting glimpses of her figure through the scattered trees, he listened eagerly for the dying sound of the horse's steps, as they passed over the rocky ground.

"Lost!" he exclaimed, when all was once more silent on the lonely hill. "I knew it must be so. The rich, the high-born, the lovely girl, once placed in the sunshine of the court, must thenceforth be unknown to the poor playfellow of her childhood! must float with brighter companions down the current of life, and leave him friendless and forgotten, to wither and rot like a worthless weed in the shadow of the same dark nook where his morn was passed," and a despairing sense of his loneliness and his poverty, pressed on him more heavily than it had ever before done.

"Yet again," he thought, "if we are henceforth to be for ever divided, why that glance, why that laugh, as sweet and joyous as of old?" and in spite of his humility, dreams of the past again soothed his mind, as with a beating heart he resumed his course over the sunny hills.

Unwilling that his agitation should excite the penetrating observation of Lady Isabel, he no longer proceeded directly towards the Manor House, but taking a circuitous course, it was near noon, when he descended by a narrow path to the back of the dwelling. The old dog that lay, half sleeping, in the little paved court, took no note of his well known footsteps, and passing on without interruption along the dark passage leading to the lady's chamber, he entered it as usual, unannounced. But no sooner had he crossed the threshold than the scene he there beheld, at once arrested his footsteps.

Lady Isabel sat even more stiff and erect than usual, on her high backed chair; not a trace remaining on her rigid features, of the tenderness and intellectual vivacity, which, when in Hubert's company, commonly illumined her sad aspect, like a gleam of sunshine falling athwart a dark cloud. Immediately opposite to her, stood a tall and

very stout man, apparently between forty and fifty years of age. He was richly, though carelessly dressed; his hair and beard somewhat between red and flaxen; and though it was evident his features and person had once been handsome, a long devotion to the pleasures of the table, had rendered them, both, fat and bloated. His large, blue eyes were heavy and lustreless; and his countenance was strongly expressive of selfishness and apathy to the feelings of others, with an inordinate devotion to sensual pleasures.

The contrast this stranger presented to Lady Isabel, with her thin features and the dark circle round her hollow eyes, was as that of matter to mind! Yet there was a resemblance between them! It was scarcely possible to say where, or what was the likeness, yet few who knew them both, could fail to remark it; and the high, narrow head, and compressed lips of the gentleman, betokened that he possessed no small portion of the matron's firmness of character. A momentary glance sufficed for Hubert justly

to conclude, that Sir Hugh Collingwood stood before him.

With her back towards the strong, clear light of the uncurtained window, sat Ellen, and leaning against the corner of a recess close beside her, with his audacious gaze fixed intently on her face, stood the cavalier, who had recently been the companion of her ride.

Although more than five and forty years of age, he was still decidedly handsome. Not a grey hair mingled in his black locks or carefully fashioned beard; and his well formed figure was set off to the utmost advantage, by a careful attention to the mysteries of dress. Yet in spite of the advantages he had received from nature, the effect of his person altogether was not pleasing, although he usually found means to ingratiate himself with women, and was the favourite of the King, and several of the noblest men of his time.

Hubert still held the open door in his hand, doubtful whether he should enter or

retire, when his eyes met those of the stranger, and he instantly resolved to show no symptoms of shrinking before his enemy. The blood of wrath mounted to the face of the courtier, his dark eyes flashed fire, and he was about to give utterance to an angry exclamation, when, remembering that he was ignorant of the youth's real character and position, with the cunning which was a part of his character, he checked the manifestation of his feelings, and turned with an enquiring glance towards Sir Hugh, as if to take from him, a measure for his conduct.

If the apparition of the unknown youth in the house of the secluded lady of the manor, had surprised him, he was yet far more astonished to behold the agitation of the Knight, as he gazed upon the intruder, though without returning his courteous salutation, of which he appeared to be unconscious. Pale and red by turns; if he had gazed upon a spectre, he could scarcely have seemed more appalled; and his voice trembled, when turning, at length, towards his

mother, he demanded in hurried accents, the name of her guest.

"By our Lady, Sir Hugh, it is clear you see the likeness, or you would not be thus agitated!" was her abrupt reply.

"Likeness, madam! What likeness?" he demanded. "I have no talent for such discoveries, but fain would know who is the audacious youth, who dares thus to intrude into the circle of your family, unsummoned, and unannounced,"

"His name, in default of a better, is Hubert Saville. You start, sir!" continued the lady, with her eagle eyes fixed upon her son's countenance, "you know that name perchance."

"I knew it once," he murmured with confusion.

"Where? When?" eagerly demanded his mother.

"In the Lancastrian ranks! it was that of a gallant knight, who fell in the battle of Hexham; but he died unmarried," he

added bitterly, "so this youth can be no descendant of his."

- "And you know nothing more?"
- "Absolutely nothing! But allow me in turn to enquire, how my lady mother has made this new, and apparently intimate acquaintance?"
 - "I knew not that I was responsible to my son, on such a score," she haughtily replied, "but as there is no mystery in this affair, as far as I am concerned," (and she laid a strong accent on the last words) "I will tell him, that this youth was placed for his education with the confessor of our family, Father Ambrose, nearly two and twenty years ago, and until he is claimed by nearer relatives, I consider him my adopted son."
 - "Ah, then I can no longer marvel at his presumptuous audacity," softly murmured the dark cavalier.
 - "I know not what your words imply, or to what you allude, Master Carlton!" returned the lady haughtily. "I was not before aware, that my protection sufficed to ren-

der any man presumptuous, or audacious, and I have yet had no reason to consider Saville either the one, or the other."

"Perhaps, madam, the judgment of a man may differ from yours, on such points," replied the courtier, with the utmost suavity, but when we recently met in the woods—pardon me—this is no story for a lady's ear—I have already said too much."

"I agree with you, if you mean to say no more," she answered haughtily, "for the sarcasm which implies an unproved slander, is tenfold more malignant than any direct accusation, which can at once be contradicted, or established. Hubert, know you to what Master Carlton alludes?"

"If this gentleman has any explanation to demand from me," returned the youth, who had hitherto, with difficulty, maintained silence, "if he seeks an honorable amend for any insult, he appears to think I have offered him, I am perfectly ready to give him all the satisfaction he can demand, but not in your presence. Though no

courtier, I am at least aware that a lady's chamber is not a place for a man to resent or renew his personal disputes."

"I am ever sorry to differ from Lady Isabel in opinion," said the cavalier, who after listening to these words with his eyes fixed on the ground, now turned towards his hostess with sneering tranquillity, "but I trust this youth's own words have now afforded her sufficient proof, that my epithet of presumptuous audacity was not misapplied. If she knew the whole transaction, of which it appears he has not the grace to be ashamed——"

"He has no cause for shame—and you know as well as I, that but for his prompt courage, I should not now be a living witness, to disprove your false accusations!" exclaimed Ellen, who, though she had hitherto listened to the conversation with burning cheeks, and downcast eyes, as if she had no acquaintance with the intruder, now started from her seat, and stood with proud and disdainful mien in front of him she ad-

dressed. "You may forget, but I cannot, that I was this morning indebted to him for my life, when your unruly charger must have forced mine over the brink of the precipice, had not he, fearlessly exposing himself to danger the most imminent, seized the head of my horse and saved me from death. You may forget, but I cannot, that I witnessed the noble gratitude with which you raised your whip to give him thanks—that he wrenched it like a straw from your grasp I allow; but surely you have little reason to complain of his audacity, when he made no better use of it, than to fling it far from him amongst the brambles."

"I should have thought Master Carlton would have rather chosen to forget, than to publish such a misadventure," said Lady Isabel looking up in his face, with a quiet, sarcastic glance, as her grand-daughter ceased speaking.

"Those who calculate on Richard Carlton's forgetfulness, may one day chance to find themselves most bitterly mistaken," was his reply, "Lady Isabel you cannot be surprised, when I tell you, that either your adopted son, or I must quit this chamber."

"I am not aware that there is any constraint put upon your movements, Sir," answered his hostess coldly. "Hubert stand, nearer the window and give the gentleman room to pass."

Master Carlton, though a subtle and practised courtier, was not prepared for such a reply, and his annoyance was evident. He felt that he had himself provoked it, and for a few moments was doubtful how to disembarrass himself from the awkwardness of his position.

For a brief space there was a profound silence in the chamber. Sir Hugh, who had been highly amused by the scene, well aware that he could gain nothing by any open opposition to his mother, intentionally forbore to take any part in the dispute. Hubert, to avoid all further altercation in such a place, would himself at once have withdrawn; but a commanding look, and a

sign from Lady Isabel for him to remain, rendered this impossible, and his own heart rejoiced, at being thus saved from the humiliation of appearing, in Ellen's presence, to shrink before his insolent enemy. He could have fallen at her feet with gratitude for her brave defence, yet he had the firmness to rememher her warning; and by no glance, or word, betrayed that she was more to him than a stranger.

The maiden on the other hand, laughed openly a joyous laugh, when she saw Master Carlton's mortification, and anticipated with delight the spectacle of his solitary departure; whilst her father, who secretly enjoyed his friend's humiliation, turned gaily towards her, and said, "As it appeared Lady Isabel was tired of their company, it would be better to mount their horses and ride back to the Tower."

"A wise and courteous decision, to save the honor of your gallant visiter," said his mother with a bitter smile. "Farewell, good Ellen," she added, holding out her hands

towards her grand-daughter. "I rejoice to see that thou hast come back from London. as brave and true as thou went which is more than every man can say. you are not afraid of a strange old woman, remember my door is open to you at all For Master Carlton it is open at times. present, but as he has found society here not much to his taste, I have a shrewd suspicion, he is not likely to enter it for the future. Farewell, most gallant gentleman. I imagine our love is even less than our acquaintance. Sir Hugh—comfort your friend—I shall not lack your company whilst you are doing him the honors of the north, in your father's old Burgundy—only—mark me—it might be better bestowed!" and she laughed with quiet sarcasm, as silently saluting her, her guests left the chamber.

Hubert alone remained, his thoughts in strange confusion; his heart beating more proudly and happily than it had done for many months before.

"Pah! this scented air of the court is

stifling," cried the lady turning towards him, as soon as they were left alone. that window, Hubert, and let me breathe, whilst I can, the air of nature. To-day thou hast shown a spirit that I admire! thou hast proved that thou art a man to be respected; and I trust, to judge by the paltry shuffling of that miserable courtier, a man to be Alone as thou art, thou wilt have feared. many such trials to bear from the petty pride of those things of custom, who measure a man's worth by his lands, or his escutcheon! But patience, patience, my sonthey are but headless arrows, when we are armed by the remembrance that honours cannot be lightly won, and that the rewards of heaven, are for sufferings meekly borne."

"A brief forbearance may at times be a duty, Madam," returned the youth, "but insults must be met as they deserve, lest what you call patience, others might call cowardice."

"Hubert!" exclaimed the lady gazing for Vol. 1.

a moment searchingly on the tranquil, yet firm, and noble demeanour of her companion. "This language hath more of the camp than the convent! Are these the lessons of Father Ambrose?"

"They are the dictates of my heart," he replied, "and I tell you frankly, the lessons of Father Ambrose are not to my taste."

"Yet you are destined to wear the frock of a monk?

"By others, perchance, Madam, but not by myself; and as the unknown personages, who presume to dictate to my inclination, have given me no reason to respect their authority, I feel I am fully justified in asserting my independence, and choosing that course of life for myself, to which I feel my nature most inclined."

"Know your protectors aught of this resolve?"

"I have spoken openly to Father Ambrose, and probably only a few days remain, till I shall ask your blessing, ere I ven-

ture amidst the agitated current of existence."

"And you shall have it, my son, whenever you are ready to depart," she answered, "but still I pray you, tarry here a few The kingdom is again on the weeks longer. eve of a fearful convulsion. King Richard the Third is universally mistrusted and de-Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, tested. descended from John of Gaunt by his mother, the only daughter of John, first Duke of Somerset, has declared himself a new pretender to the throne, and has for many months been preparing forces on the Continent to invade the kingdom. The failure and execution of the Duke of Buckingham, for a while retarded his attempt, but I have reason to know his efforts are renewed with redoubled vigour, aided by the secret intrigues of his mother, the Countess of Richthond, now married to Lord Stanley. Henry is a sincere Lancastrian, and should he drive the bloody son of York from his ill-begotten

throne, the old friends of the Red Rose will be again triumphant, and I may have means to advance your fortunes, which now I cannot hope for. Four members of my family have died on the battle field for Lancaster—and one more dear than all—but let that pass. Should you find it necessary to leave the dwelling of the vicar, come hither, my son, and I will ever give you a mother's welcome.

But mark me—on one condition."

"Name it, dear lady!" said the youth.
"That you leave Carlton's insolence unpunished!"

"But I pray you reflect, Madam."

"I have reflected, and my reflections are more calm than thine; moreover, I know much of which thou art ignorant, and I charge thee, Hubert, by thy value for my protection, by thy value for my love—leave that minion unmolested, to writhe under the mortification I this morning inflicted on him."

"But should he call on me for satisfaction?" "Promise me to wait till then, I ask no more," was the lady's reply.

"Had his blow fallen, it must have been otherwise," said Hubert, "but as it is your desire, I will now wait until I am summoned. Tell me, Madam, I pray you, who is this favored guest of Sir Hugh, who seems to assume, as by right, the place of a brother, at his daughter's side?"

"Or of a lover," she returned with a smile:

"nay start not, Hubert, I may be wrong in such a fancy; but this I know is fact, that

in default of male heir, in our branch of the family, he inherits all the lands of Sir Hugh,

held as a male fief from the crown."

"Yet as he does not bear the name of Collingwood, he can only be related to the family by the female line?"

"Not so. His grand-father was the uncle of my husband, but changed his name for certain lands at Rothbury, where now the family resides. Though Master Carlton's patrimony is small, he has noble relatives by the mother's side, and by their interest, and his own cunning, he has reaped a rich harvest from the troubles of the times. He had an office at court under Edward the Fourth—he is the favourite secretary of Richard the Third, and it has been whispered that he bore a dark part in poor George Clarence's death, and other more recent transactions, into which no man dares to pry too narrowly. He must have weighty business in hand, to quit the court at a crisis so important."

"Perchance he is weary of waiting for the lands of Sir Hugh," said Hubert with trembling lips, "and seeks to obtain possession, by a marriage with his daughter, of the large property she inherits in right of her mother."

"It may be so," returned the lady. "Her father has no right to touch a shilling of her fortune, but he may cancel the debts the world says he owes Master Carlton, by aiding his suit with his unsuspecting daughter. It is not however unlikely that he has come hither to levy troops, either for the court, or

the invader, as best suits his purpose; for he well knows there are men ever ready to take amongst the wild moss-troopers of Redesdale, and the Upper Tyne. These northern men formerly fought as good soldiers under Hilliard, whom they called Robin of Redesdale, but since his death, no man has more power amongst them than Marston Convers, the cousin of the brave Sir John Convers, who in his first battle took Sir Richard Woodville, the Queen's father, prisoner, and sent him to the block. Implicated by his relative, he lives an outlaw without hope of pardon, and all men know him for a gallant soldier."

- "It is little likely then that he will have anything to do with a Yorkish courtier like Master Carlton," said Hubert simply.
- "There is no saying under what pretences he may seek to gain adherents," answered Lady Isabel; "only I warn you, Hubert, if you are resolved to take up arms, to be careful under whose banner you enlist."

"I swear to draw my sword for none but Henry, Earl of Richmond," cried the youth eagerly.

"You do well! but take heed you are not deceived; and wait patiently till I tell you the hour is come. I know more, my son, than even you suspect, and by heaven's favour you shall not lack friends to push your fortunes! But enough of this, for the present. Come to me to-morrow, when I shall perhaps be able to tell you more; and now, on your way back to the village, I pray you take this packet to old Andrew, the miller. He knows how to dispose of it. I must have gone myself, had I not found so trusty a messenger; but it is as well I should not incur the risk of being tracked to his dwelling."

"I am ready to obey your commands at all times," answered Hubert, as he received the small packet the lady gave him, without testifying the surprise he felt at receiving such a commission.

The entrance of the old servant, who at.

length ventured to remind her lady that the hour was long past for her mid-day meal, here put an end to further discourse, and Hubert, taking a hasty farewell, left the Manor House and turned his steps towards the valley of the mill.

CHAPTER VIII.

The path of Hubert lay near the edge of the moors, which, fragrant with the flowers of spring, spread far and wide to the mountains of the Cheviot. All the mysteries of turnips, and barley, and long woolled sheep, and short woolled sheep, were then unknown in those wild districts, and the grouse, and the deer, and the hare, were left in undisturbed possession of the trackless deserts, save when the bugle of the huntsman called the peasant to follow his Lord

over the mountains to the chase, or the fierce clamour of border warfare, broke the silence of the solitude, and the green turf was dyed with the blood of the slain. There had the Percy and the Douglas won their fame; there had the Scottish King been made prisoner; and there the savage pleasures of the chase had often ended in yet more savage battles.

But that day all was peaceful on the flowery hills, and the hare lay as quiet amidst the long grass, and the deer in the fern, as if neither wars nor hunting had ever interrupted the tranquillity of nature. heart of Hubert was too young to feel for long the weight of sadness, and bounded once more with delight, when the fresh breeze blew around him. Though uncertain as to his destiny, with the ardour of youth, he looked forward, with sanguine hope, to the unknown future. The announcement of his determination never to become a priest, had relieved him from one subject for anxiety; and the busy adventures of the day, so different from the ordinary tranquil current of his existence, filled his mind with new feelings, and new ideas. He felt as if he had awakened to a second life, and even the remembrance of Ellen came less sadly before him. He trusted he had won her respect, and that whatever others might think of him, she, at least, for the future, would not think him incapable of gaining, by his own endeavours, an honourable rank, she need not blush to share.

It is thus that activity ever revives the energy of the soul, and the very struggle with difficulties, gives strength to conquer them.

For two and twenty years, Andrew, the miller, had not failed to keep a watchful eye upon Hubert, and had often attracted him to his humble dwelling by his merry tales and ballads. The old man had taught him the angler's craft, and the swordsman's art, and as age gradually robbed him of his strength, the youth often came in the early morning to aid him in the culture of his little garden, or to bring in firewood from

the forest. Andrew loved him as if he had been his own son, but his welcome was even more than usually joyous, when he found him sitting that afternoon on the sunny bench before his door.

"Ah, Master Hubert," he cried the moment he beheld his visiter crossing the stream towards him, "right glad I am to see you. I have been to the village to seek you—I have climbed the Hunter's knoll to look out, but I could see nothing of you, high, or low; and I was just resting myself a quarter of an hour before I started for the Manor House. I have something to tell you, I promise you!"

"And what may be this wonderful news, that you have taken such trouble to carry?" returned the youth with a smile. "Have you seen a pike in the old mill stream, or has an otter made its appearance amongst the rushes?"

"You are merry, young gentleman," said Andrew with a cunning nod, "but I warrant my tidings are no such common matter. What would you say if I had a letter from a fair young lady to deliver to you?"

"A letter, and from a lady! impossible! I know no ladies!" he exclaimed.

"What, Master Hubert! surely you know one young lady, and a very fair young lady moreover."

"Ellen Collingwood?"

"Ay, to be sure, and a proud man you may be, for this morning her maiden, Peggy, the same she took with her to London, came running down here, like a partridge over the new stubble, with a precious paper, she said, her mistress wished you to have with all despatch. Ah, poor Mistress Ellen! doubtless there are many troubles and trials come upon her, since she sat there with you before the door, playing with the pebbles by the edge of the stream! But she has not forgotten her playfellow it seems, nor old Andrew neither, heaven bless her!"

"But the letter—I pray you give me the letter!" demanded Hubert impatiently.

"I have hid it in the house, till I started

again," said the old man, "but follow me, and you shall have it directly."

So saying, he arose, and entered the cottage, followed by his guest, whose impatience knew no bounds, till the miller, after poking about for some minutes in a dark cupboard, placed the precious packet in his hands. He eagerly tore it open—it contained only two lines, but the initials E. C. were at the bottom, and his joy was immoderate when he perused these words—"Meet me to-night at nine o'clock by Bertram's well, on the banks of the Willy burn. I have not forgotten the past, and am unchanged, although I dare not seem so. E. C."

In the first burst of delight, Hubert unconsciously read aloud, and he was first made aware that he had betrayed Ellen's confidence, when raising his eyes from the paper, he beheld the countenance of the miller, illumined by a most joyous and triumphant expression.

"Andrew, what have I said! what have you heard?" he eagerly exclaimed.

"Nothing, that I will betray," he answered solemnly, "you may trust Andrew with your life! But hush, Master Hubert, surely I heard some one stirring in the old mill within! It must be some one from the hills, or they would never come through that way."

"Yes truly, there are heavy steps," replied the young man, "but ere they enter, Andrew, take this packet, Lady Isabel sent me to deliver to you. I had nearly forgotten it."

"Quick! quick!" cried the miller hastily seizing it, and he had scarcely time to conceal it in the folds of his tattered garments, when an old door, in a corner near the chimney, was thrown open, and a most unexpected apparition appeared upon its threshold.

The broad, yellow beam of the declining sun, that shot through the narrow casement, fell direct upon the tall, athletic figure of a stranger, whilst all behind him in the half ruined building lay in darkness and mystery, so as to render yet more striking his remarkable person and costume.

His broad shoulders and powerful limbs were of the most noble proportions; and though his brown beard, and the locks that still curled thickly around his high forehead, were tinged with grey, and the wrinkles of fifty years had furrowed his once smooth, fair skin, yet his strength appeared undiminished; his commanding person, unbent by time, or labour, and his clear, cheerful, blue eyes, were as bright and sparkling as if not more than twenty summers had passed above His whole countenance had the his head. frank and benevolent expression of a warm hearted and generous soldier, and quickly dispelled the first fears of Hubert, though even a moment's survey sufficed to convince him that no common man stood before him, but one long used to enjoy and exercise command.

THE WARD OF THE CROWN.

The dress of this unexpected visiter, was not less remarkable than his person, and heightened, by its wildness, the picturesque grandeur of his appearance, and the dignity of his noble and somewhat haughty carriage. His coarse, blue gown, that fitted up closely to his finely formed throat, was made of the common woollen cloth, spun by the northern women; his long hose were of the same material, his boots of a bullock's hide, most rudely tanned, with the black hair still remaining on the wide tops, which were turned over nearly to the ankle, so as fully to display his handsome legs; around his waist he wore, bound as a sash, one of the small, checked woollen plaids of the country, and from its folds protruded the handle of a heavy battle axe, that few save himself could wield. A short sword hung under his left arm, and a couple of stout knives were in his girdle. On his head he wore a low cap of the wild marten's fur, and a white sheep skin was suspended from his shoulders, to be by turns his mantle, and by turns his bed.

The tranquillity with which the miller received this martial personage, at once convinced Hubert, that he came thither as a friend.

- " Marston Conyers," said Andrew, hastily arising.
- "Nay, call me Mat o' the Tower, like other honest folk," said the stranger, with a good humoured laugh, "I have almost forgotten to answer to the name of Marston Conyers, it is so long since I consorted with court gentles. But who have you here, Andrew? something more noble than a cheviot herdsman, methinks."
- "I thought perchance you might have known him," answered the miller, with a keen glance at the stranger, which did not escape the observation of the youth. "At all events, you must have heard of Master Hubert Saville, in the village."
- "By my faith, a gallant fellow," murmured Conyers, as if speaking his thoughts aloud, as he surveyed the young man, "if his heart be equal to that fair exterior, he

will do honor to a noble name! yet what is a name? men live as happily without one; and others of proud descent, and an exterior of which he seems now the counterpart, have, in youth's brightest days, lost all, and as dust to dust returned. Ah! Andrew, even to women and babes who took no part in these wars, what profitted their nobility? no more than a steel buckler against a thunder bolt. It served only to draw down the deadly fire upon their heads, which struck them to the ground. Those were wild times, young man, of which you can know little, but Andrew and I stood often side by side, on the battle field; we saw the blood of friends and enemies flow equally from the scaffold; we saw the harvests laid waste in their plenty; we saw the dwellings of the rich and the poor making wild bonfires to the frozen winter: we saw the delicate daughters of the court begging their bread with their houseless orphans hanging at their breast—but enough—enough. have beheld our best friends perish by the sword, or the axe, and yet we are here to tell the tale; and we have been merry since then too, if the truth must be told, as merry as many an honest boor that never heard the twang of a cross-bow. I think sometimes we must have flinty hearts."

"And in good sooth you have cause to be merry!" said Andrew, smiling. "You are more honoured by all the men of Redesdale, than any captain, except Hilliard, that ever yet led them to a foray, or a battle; you are strong and healthy, lead a gallant life full of adventure and change, you are obliged to follow no man's banner save at your own pleasure, and then you have a companion, Master Conyers!"

"Enough! enough!" exclaimed the soldier, hastily. "We shall tire this youth with our old world stories, and it behoves us more to be thinking of the present. I hear that Sir Hugh Collingwood has arrived with his fair daughter. Is the story true?"

" I saw them, not two hours ago," replied Hubert. "They came from the Tower to pay their respects to Lady Isabel, at the Manor House."

"Or perhaps to look after her jewels," returned the soldier, with a laugh that echoed through the rafters of the old building. "Ah, she is a brave old dame, that Lady Isabel. But tell me, is there not a certain Richard Carlton of Rothbury, or Black Dick, as the country people call him, on a visit to Sir Hugh?"

"Yes, I met him this morning in the woods, and he came afterwards to the Manor House?"

"And did he dare to put a foot into the same chamber with Lady Isabel?" demanded the miller eagerly. "In truth, though I gave him credit for audacity, I did not think him capable of that!"

"Has such a great man reason to fear her?" inquired Hubert.

"It seems he fears neither man, woman, nor devil, when there is no danger," said the trooper, "and yet were he brought to the scaffold, we should see him play the coward, or I am mistaken. But do you

know, young man, for what purpose he went to the manor?"

- "I know nothing, but that having this morning unwittingly offended him, he charged me most rudely in the lady's presence; and she answered his complaint in such sharp language, that Sir Hugh was was obliged to retire with all speed, to spare his friend from being compelled to make a most dishonorable retreat."
- "And you were the cause of his being thus severely treated?"
- "Most certainly! Yet without any malice on my part, for I knew him not."
- "No matter; the effect is all the same. Take heed to your own safety, young man, for you have given deadly offence to one who knows not how to forgive. There is already some mischief at work, or he had not come from the court at such a crisis, in the train of Sir Hugh, whom he has made his slave by his loans. There is neither buck nor bird to be found in the hills at this season; and I suspect he is looking after

other game! We hear that Henry of Richmond is in arms again—and both he and the King have ere now had need of the men of Redesdale, and paid them well. Which ever party is likely to prosper, Carlton is ready to serve."

"But no man will know that till the last minute," said the miller.

"He is a cunning politician, where there is anything to be gained," replied Conyers, "but mark me, young man, I know you not, but your appearance has something that pleases me, and I should be sorry to see you that scoundrel's victim; therefore, mark my words, I pray you, and be on your guard against him; if he professes to pardon you, and seeks to enlist you under his banner, trust none of his promises; and if Sir Hugh still tries to tempt you to become a Churchman, reject his offers, as you would shun the pest!"

"You talk strangely!" cried the youth.

"I sometimes see more than meets the eye, and hear more than comes to the ears

of common men," answered the soldier, with his usual careless laugh, "and moreover, I have a shrewd guess you are not much inclined to Holy Orders, my brave youth."

- "I have refused to enter the Church," was the reply.
- "Ah ha! thou hast done bravely! but when did this fall out?"
- "This morning. When Father Ambrose heard of Sir Hugh's arrival, he openly rejoiced at it, as if the Knight had an interest in procuring my entrance into a cloister; surprised at his manner, I told him plainly, that no force upon earth should compel me to take the oaths of a priest."
- "And what other path is it your intention to pursue?" demanded the soldier.
- "That to which my friend Lady Isabel, by God's blessing, shall direct me." returned Hubert firmly and tranquilly. "I am young, strong, and not ill taught, and I doubt not, there are many honorable ways, by which even a poor man can carve out his fortune, either by his pen, or his sword. I

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have no fears, for I rely not on myself, but on Providence."

"Yet Providence may sometimes please to place your destiny in your own hands, young man; and believe me, success only attends on those, who at such moments prove themselves capable of profitting by the bounty of Heaven. If not a priest, is it likely you will turn soldier; and again let me warn you, sooner to die than enlist under Carlton's banner."

"I thank you," returned Hubert, every moment more and more surprised by the noble language of the stranger. "If you had witnessed the events of this morning, you would feel no mistrust on that score. If he had murdered my own father, I could not regard him with more instinctive aversion."

Hubert was astonished when he ceased speaking, to behold the effect his concluding words had produced on the miller; for a moment, as the last rays of the declining sun streamed bright on his face, he saw

that the glance of gay good humour had left his eyes, and that they were fixed on him with an expression of grief and horror; his clasped hands were pressed convulsively together, and a slight tremour of the head betrayed his internal agitation. In another moment the sun was gone, and there was a profound silence in the dark hovel.

"Can this old man know ought of my parentage?" was the thought that flashed like lightning through the brain of Hubert, but ere he could give it utterance, Andrew recovered his composure, and turning with a laugh to Conyers, told him he had an excellent cup of ale in his cellar. "The last barrel your yeoman brought me, still runs strong, and I have a good deer's ham in the cupboard that lacks eating."

"Forth with them, my good fellow," returned the soldier, "for a ride over the hills has given me a lusty appetite."

This desire was speedily complied with by the miller, and as Hubert had tasted nothing since morning, he did not refuse to partake of the coarse, but plentiful provision, that ere long covered the humble board.

He was anxious to know more of Marston Conyers, the celebrated outlaw, of whom, for years, he had heard many a wild and marvellous tale, without having the slightest suspicion of his intimacy with his old acquaintance, Andrew. All he saw and heard of this remarkable man, during the ensuing hour, only tended to increase his wonder and admiration.

His discourse was, by turns, merry and severe; now sparkling with wit and gay allusions—now grave and sublime, and proving not only that he was possessed of an elevated and cultivated mind, but that at an earlier period of his life he had been habituated to society of the very highest order.

The discourse was chiefly confined to discussions on the state of the kingdom, and the public disturbances likely to be apprehended; yet, ever and anon, some word fell from the miller, or his guest, which proved

their long acquaintance and mutual knowledge of Lady Isabel's and Sir Hugh Collingwood's affairs.

The varied and fascinating discourse of Conyers, which, without a shadow of constraint or premeditation, appeared to reflect the versatile mind of the speaker, seemed at length to have entirely banished the remembrance of all care or sorrow from the whole party in the hut, when their mirth was suddenly interrupted by a knocking at the same door by which the soldier had previously entered, and which, unperceived by Hubert, he had secured behind him.

The silence this summons instantly occasioned, was followed by a soft, low, sweet whistle, like the last notes of the nightingale when the night melts into the dawn, to which Hubert was astonished to hear the outlaw immediately reply, by a similar sound, though sharper and less musical.

"Ha! ha! my little bird is there!" he cried, "I marvel what weighty affair hath made her spread her wings so quickly after

me?" and he arose ere the miller could leave his seat, and proceeded to unbar the door.

If Hubert had previously been astonished by the appearance of Conyers, when he issued from the ruined mill, he was ten times more so, when he beheld the figure which, following the outlaw, as he returned to his seat, seemed to arise like an apparition from the earth, into the broad light of the miller's faggot fire, and rather to belong to the race of fairies, with which the peasants there believe their mountains peopled, than to be a creature of ordinary flesh and blood, an inhabitant of the warlike and lawless valley, where was the home of Conyers.

It wore the short tunic and hose of a boy, made of the same coarse, blue stuff as that of the outlaw, and carried a cap of moleskin, in a hand so small, so delicate, so fair, that it seemed to belong to one born to be ever decked in silks and velvets. The hair, as black as the raven's wing, was parted from the smooth, white forehead, and fell

over the shoulders in waving masses, leaving uncovered the small transparent ear, and a portion of a throat, as white as alabaster. The beauty of the face was most remarkable, and of a description so peculiar, so wild, so sad, and yet so sweet and full of soul, that once seen, it was never to be forgotten by any, but those of most dull and unfeeling nature.

Perfect in form, it was thin, and so pale, that the blue veins could distinctly be seen through the soft, rich, ivory skin. The finely chiselled nose was slightly aquiline, and beneath the soft curled lips, shone forth two rows of brilliant teeth, white as the blossom of the thorn; the large, melting, black eyes, with their sable fringes, were like two visions, full of change and mystery, where it seemed as if the secrets of the past and the future lay half hidden in their beauty, and that the soul there spoke a language to which no voice had ever given utterance.

Hard must have been the heart which

could resist the gaze of those imploring eyes, which ever seemed to demand pity for the mute suffering of an aching heart.

The small and rounded figure was of most light and delicate proportions, and the fairy feet and hands were, alone, sufficient to convince Hubert that the garments of a boy concealed a female form.

The moss-trooper, as if feeling that secrecy there was needless, at once addressed this lovely being by her name; and blushes flitted like sunbeams over her pale face, and her eyes rested with the softest expression of trust and tenderness on the soldier's face, as he said, "Marion, what brings thee hither, my good girl, so swift upon my footsteps?"

"A letter, Master Conyers," she returned in a voice most musical and soft. "An hour after you had left the Grange, a mounted messenger arrived at fullest speed. He demanded a private interview with you and when he heard that you had ridden forth, he declared that he must follow you. 'He was charged,' he said, 'with letters of most pressing import, that would not brook delay.' Your groom brought him to my chamber, and when he found I knew your secret signs, and responded to his question, 'are the fish caught?' by the quick answer, that we only waited till the lines were baited, he begged that I would take charge of these letters and deliver them with all despatch," and as she spoke, she held forth to the outlaw, a folded paper, bound with silken threads and fastened by an enormous seal of black wax.

"Ah! ha!" he exclaimed, as he eagerly received it, "the fruit is ripening fast, it seems. But surely, my brave Marion, thou didst not come alone, over the wild moors?"

"No, master," she timidly replied, "for though I once before had ridden here with you, the snow was on the ground, and all is now so different, that I feared I might miss the way, and so lose precious time. I therefore brought old Adam Bell, on his shaggy pony, to serve me as a guide, as far as the head of the valley; but that he might not know your hiding-place, I left him with the horses in the wood, near an old stone quarry, whilst I came hither alone."

"Thou art worth twenty men-at-arms, my precious Marion," said the outlaw, lifting his eyes from the paper he was eagerly perusing, and gazing for a moment on the object of his commendation with an expression of tenderness, his features were rarely seen to assume. "But art thou not weary with thy long gallop over the hills? Wilt thou not eat?"

"I feel no fatigue, now I have found thee," she said with blushing grace, and tears glittered on her dark eye-lashes. "I am more weary of sitting alone in the old Grange, when thou art away."

"I must speak with you alone, Marion," said Conyers, suddenly arising, after a brief silence, during which the maiden had seated herself on a chair opposite to him, and crossing her arms upon the table, continued,

as if unconscious of the presence of others, to gaze, with the most profound interest, upon his agitated countenance, as his eyes glanced with anxiety from line to line of the scroll he held.

Hubert, the moment he heard these words, likewise instantly arose; for though deeply interested in the passing scene, and the new characters to which chance had thus strangely introduced him, he had not forgotten Ellen's request, that he should meet her at nine o'clock; and as the sun had now long been set, he felt he must lose no time in proceeding to the place of appointment.

He was anxious, likewise, to leave Conyers and his fair messenger at liberty to discuss the important affairs which were evidently in agitation between them; and although his curiosity was excited to the highest pitch, by all he had seen and heard, aware that he had no right to intrude longer unbidden on their privacy, he determined at once to depart.

"Excuse me, Master Conyers," he said with a graceful courtesy, which, for the first time, drew the eyes of the maiden upon him, "it is my part, not yours, to leave this dwelling. I perceive there are no secrets between you and our friend Andrew, and I have pressing business calls me hence, which will admit of no further delay. I will now therefore wish you farewell, and I beg you to believe, I am sincerely grateful for the interest you have so kindly expressed in one unknown to you as I am."

"Then you will not forget my warning," said the soldier, accepting the proffered hand of Hubert, and returning its pressure with a hearty shake. "I find, by my letters, there is more than ever need you should be on your guard against that subtle courtier! But like yourself I have no time to lose, so, now farewell! we shall meet again ere long, I have little doubt, and may learn to know each other better, before we rest in a churchyard."

Hubert, perceiving that no answer was ex-

pected to these hurried words, cast a parting glance at the miller, bowed low to the disguised maiden, who was gazing at him with evident curiosity, and then once more saluting the outlaw, passed from the low, front door of the cottage into the dewy moonlight. Though his heart beat high with hope and joy, as he hurried towards the place of meeting appointed by Ellen, yet again and again the image of the mysterious maiden, and of Marston Convers, the renowned outlaw of Redesdale, passed like spectres before him. They had left an impression on his mind, like that of a vivid dream, which we comprehend not, and yet feel, as it haunts our memory, that whilst it seems dimly to reveal to us the secrets of the past, it bears a mysterious and eventful connexion with our future destiny.

CHAPTER IX.

ELLEN COLLINGWOOD was endowed with one of those rare characters, which unite, to high talents and natural gaiety, the utmost simplicity, purity, and generosity of soul. Utterly without vanity, she treasured the praise of those she valued, only as a proof of their love; and when once firmly assured that the course she had chosen to pursue was right, she heeded no more the opinions of common men, than the idle patter of the rain against

her casement. Young as she was, she had a profound contempt for all things mean and false, and an ardent admiration for the nobility of nature, which many men fail to recognise, except when clothed with the nobility of birth. She had spent her childhood, and her youth, amongst the wild scenery of the hills, and she loved the beauty of nature, as those only love it, who see in it, a shadow of yet more perfect things, to which the soul, even on earth, aspires with ever increasing hope and adoration, the nearer it beholds the abyss of the grave. She had no sympathy with those who worship the pomps and vanities of life. understood not the false value which men of society set on worthless things. Taken suddenly from the wilds of the north, and placed in the centre of a court, she soon learnt to despise the paltry passions, which there most commonly excite the activity even of the greatest intellects; and when she beheld the personal rivalry for place and petty power,

which men honor by the name of ambition, the mean avarice, the pride, hypocrisy, and miserable lust of praise, with which the courtiers around her, wilfully embittered their existence, her thoughts dwelt with pleasure on the noble character and unsophisticated nature of her early companion, Hubert Saville.

When far apart, and amidst splendid scenes, which might have seemed the most likely to banish him from her remembrance, she first learnt fully to appreciate his virtues, and his pre-eminence in all those qualities she esteemed the highest.

When trials, she little expected, came thick upon her, it was from Hubert alone she hoped for aid, and the love which had scarcely blossomed when they parted, ripened, during their long separation, into a passion the most trusting and devoted. She knew that Hubert was poor and friendless, yet when persecuted, and alone amidst the busy throngs of London, this knowledge did not

diminish her trust in the conviction, that he, and he alone, was destined to protect, and save her from an impending danger, even more terrible to her than death; such was her firm reliance on the strength of his character, his simple, straight-forward honesty, activity, and intensity of purpose.

It was the idea of again beholding him, which had made her accompany her father to the north with a joyous heart, even in the detested company of Master Carlton; and it was that hope which brought the merry laugh again on her lips, and the roses on her cheeks, when she once more felt the breezes of her native Cheviot blow fresh upon her brow.

Speedily convinced by the answers she received to her inquiries, that the character of Hubert had remained unchanged during her absence, she lost no time in making an effort to renew their former intercourse. At the dawn of the first morning after her arrival at the Tower, she wrote the hurried lines which Hubert received from the miller, but

unfortunately the honesty of her waitingmaid, Peggy Brewis, to whose care she confided her letter for delivery, was little to be relied on.

Ellen had no suspicion that the contagion of London example, and London flattery, and London gold, had rendered the pretty village belle, utterly unworthy of her confidence. She knew not, that she was the hired tool of her worst enemy, and that, whilst with insidious art she gained her favour, she was paid as a spy, to report to Master Carlton her every word and action.

With many promises of diligence and secrecy in the execution of her mistress's wishes, this artful creature received the letter for Hubert, and a quarter of an hour later, she was standing beside the writing table of Carlton, who was deliberately perusing its contents.

With the most easy assurance she surveyed him from head to foot, whilst his attention was thus engaged. The light fell from the high gothic window full upon his handsome person, loosely attired in a furred, morning gown of green velvet, and his piercing, black eyes, well curled beard, and delicately white hand, adorned by a richly set sapphire ring, filled the waiting-maid with admiration. Nevertheless, she failed not shortly to remark, that a small mirror hung directly behind him, nor was she less satisfied by the occasional contemplation of her own pretty person reflected therein, though much against her will, disguised in a close, linen cap, and russet gown.

"Yes, you are a lovely creature, by my soul you are," cried Master Carlton, looking up suddenly, when she was lost in pleasing contemplation of herself, "the court cavaliers may praise the mistress's beauty if they please, but, on mine honour, the maid is ten times more to my taste! But tell me, my sweet Peggy, do you know the fellow to whom this letter is addressed?"

"Know him! yes to be sure, as well as the cross, in the village market-place!" she pertly replied.

- " He is young, no doubt?"
- "Somewhere about twenty-more, or less."
 - " And handsome?"
- .. "That may be as people please to consider him. He is tall, and straight, and well favoured, but—not to my taste."
- "So much the better," said the Secretary, with a malicious smile. "Is he rich, or poor?"
- "As poor as a moor-hen, after a six weeks' frost."
 - " Is he well born?"
- "No man knows, but there are people who do say, he is Sir Hugh's own son, though born without the ceremony of marriage, and that makes me so scrupulous about carrying Mistress Ellen's love letters. You understand me, Master Carlton?"
- "Oh, yes perfectly! I have heard of this youth before now. His name, if I mistake not, is Hubert Saville?"
- "The same. He has dwelt with the vicar, next door to my mother, since he was

a babe, and nobody knows how he came there, but it is certain he was some misborn brat, for he was ever so set up with pride, that he could not deign to speak a civil word to any honest maiden in the village. Nothing would serve him, but Mistress Collingwood forsooth!"

- "Then he had no smiles for Peggy Brewis, it seems?"
- "I scorn his impertinence," she replied with a saucy toss of the head, "but we all know it is the mad, old lady at the Manor House, has turned his brain with her flattery."
- "Ha, does Lady Isabel know anything of this youth?" inquired the courtier.
- "He has half lived under her roof, since he was eight years old, and if any ill comes of this love between him and Mistress Ellen, Sir Hugh will have nobody but his mother to thank for it, for she had them there always together, till the summons came for the young lady to join her father in London. If Sir Hugh expects to inherit her savings,

or to marry his daughter nobly, he had better keep a sharper look out, than he has done for some time past, or Lady Isabel may chance to find a husband for the one, and an heir for the other, when he little expects either."

- "Bravo, Peggy! you are an admirable politician!" said the gentleman, with a bland and encouraging smile, which just sufficed to show his white and even teeth between his dark and delicately formed mustachios. "So the lady of the Manor has savings, her neighbours say?"
- "Thousands upon thousands of angels, and crowns," returned Peggy. "Moreover everybody knows she keeps all the family jewels from Sir Hugh, to which he was lawful heir at his brother's death."
- "Ay, at his brother's death!" murmured Master Carlton, between his teeth. "That must have been long ago! Has no one any suspicion where these jewels are hid?"
- "No one exactly knows," returned the waiting-maid with a mysterious nod, "but

as you and I are friends, Master Carlton, I will tell you something, which till this moment never passed my lips."

- "You surely must be convinced, by the confidence I place in you, that you may trust me in all things," said the subtle courtier, taking Peggy's hand with a smile she was utterly unable to resist.
- "I would have told you all before now," she replied, "but I knew not, you cared to hear such tales. My father has now been dead ten years—"
- "And what, by all the saints, has your father to do with Lady Isabel's jewels?" hastily demanded her impatient listener.
- "My father was a mason," she answered, "a soft, simple creature, as I have heard my mother say, and he could keep no secrets from her."
- "But what has this to do with the treasure?" again demanded the gentleman.
- "Listen patiently and you will soon learn," was Peggy's response. "It was a cold day in winter, my father had had no work for amonth,

and we children had all been sent supperless to bed, whilst my mother sat crouching over a few smoking sticks lamenting their misery. I heard him say at length, when he thought we all slept. 'This is sad work Molly! I wish the Holy Virgin would send me such another job as I had this time ten years, up at the Manor House, in that terrible hard winter, when there was not a stroke of work to be done for the frost, for three months It saved us all from starving,' together. 'And what might that be Peter?' answered my mother. 'I was sworn to secrecy,' he returned, 'but it is so long ago, I may e'en tell thee, if thou wilt promise never breathe a word of it to living man.' this she readily agreed, 'Well then,' he continued, "it was just to make a hole under ground, for the old dame to put her treasure in, and a precious heavy box she has, I can tell you! since we have been so poor, it haunts me day and night, as if the Evil one sought to put temptation in my way, to make sure of me, body and soul!' I remem-

ber his words as if it were but yesterday," continued Peggy, "for they made the flesh creep on my bones," 'And could you find the treasure, Peter, do you think?' demanded my mother, who seemed to have less fear of the tempter before her eyes. 'I should be a fool if I could not, when I made the hiding hole myself, under the great parlour,' he returned, 'yes, it is just under a cracked board in the north-west corner, and I sometimes think that when the lady and her housekeeper are both asleep, nobody would be the wiser if I were to creep in through the dairy window, and just help myself to half a dozen gold pieces to keep us all from starving. But then, I think, I see the old one grinning over my shoulder, and I lose heart.' 'But when you get work you could put it back again, Peter!' said my mother. 'But the dogs Molly, you forget the dogs,' he returned---"

"This is curious," said Master Carlton, more deeply interested in the maiden's nar-vol. I.

rative, than he chose to confess. "And did your father take courage at last?"

"I know not!" returned the girl. "It was a thaw the next day, and he had plenty of work, till he died the following autumn."

"And your mother kept the secret?"

"I believe she did so, faithfully; but she died before my father."

"No doubt she knew right well her husband had swallowed a cup too much, and paid no attention to such nonsense," said the Secretary.

"Oh, Sir! but Lady Isabel's treasure is the talk of the whole country!" she persisted.

"Likely enough," he replied, "but a truce to such folly Peggy, there is a piece of gold for you, worth more than all that will ever be found under the Lady's parlour, I dare be sworn; and now let us speak of serious matters, and leave these follies to amuse the old women in the village."

"Indeed, Master Carlton, there is no need of this," murmured the girl, quietly slipping well, I would lay down my life to serve you without a thought of gain, and for the matter of that foolish letter, I really brought it to you, thinking to serve my young lady; for if Master Hubert should by any chance be her brother——"

"It would be dreadful!" cried Carlton interrupting her. "Very true, so light me that taper, that I may make fast this precious scrawl, as if no hands profane had opened it; and then, Peggy, you must carry it forthwith to its destination. I hope none of the domestics saw you enter my chamber!"

"Not a creature."

"So much the better, and now, as I have many important letters to write, you must leave me for the present; but I shall expect to see you again this evening—no, to-morrow early, at the end of the old avenue. So now farewell, and be assured I shall not readily forget the good services you have done me," and with many gentle greetings, he most courteously got rid of his fair visiter.

"Heaven be praised," he murmured as soon as he was once more alone, "heaven be praised that I am at length rid of that chattering cockatrice! It is a dear penalty we must pay for success, to be compelled to make use of such creatures! but the weakest tool in skilful hands, has wrought out many a wondrous work ere now; and by my faith this girl may be of more use than I imagined; and if there be any truth in this tale of her father, Sir Hugh may look in vain for his mother's treasure to pay me his debts. Then, to escape disgrace and ruin, he will be compelled to purchase my forbearance, with his daughter's hand. He has tried all gentle means in vain, he says, but the young lady This letter to master Huis obstinate. bert explains the reason! There is some mystery about that youth which must be fathomed! I must speak to Sir Hugh without delay; and now to business—these border men must first be treated with, to be ready to fight for either side, I find it most convenient to support-and here are already

three letters from the court, need speedy answers. Ah, if I fail to win a Baron's coronet, before another year has passed above my head, let fools mock me, as I tread the streets!"

And with this object of ambition ever in view, and others of greater magnitude, only yet half defined, even to himself, the courtier once more sat down at his writing table, and resumed the arduous labours of intrigue.

In consequence of mature reflection, when he met Sir Hugh at eleven o'clock, at the dinner table, he made no allusion to any business of importance. He gave himself, apparently, entirely to the pleasures of the moment, and spared no pains to render his conversation agreeable to the Knight and his daughter. He wished to be more sure of his ground before he advanced further, for he knew full well, that in Sir Hugh Collingwood he had a man to deal with, as practised in the ways of the world, and almost as

subtle, as himself, though with a less versatile and cultivated intellect.

An hour afterwards his rencontre with Hubert in the woods occurred, followed by their meeting in Lady Isabel's parlour; and if the letter of the morning, and Peggy's information, had before excited his jealousy, that jealousy was deepened into hatred the most intense, by the conduct of the youth himself, the bold defence which Ellen had dared to make for him; and by the insult Lady Isabel had put upon him in the presence of a rival so contemptible. Even more than all this, the personal appearance of Hubert excited many strange feelings in his It recalled to him with painful force the remembrance of things he had long striven to bury in oblivion. The attachment of Lady Isabel for this young man, was a thing for which he could by no means rationally account, except by suspicions which, if proved just, would suffice to wither all his budding honors; and when he returned to his apartments that afternoon, it was with a dark, but firm conviction, that Hubert was a rival in love and fortune, that must speedily be removed from his path, exsuccess was likely to attend his projects.

CHAPTER X.

The dwelling of Sir Hugh Collingwood was a tall, square tower of ancient and strong construction, surrounded by a deep, dull moat, crossed in front of the great gate, by a draw-bridge. At times, when no inroad from the Scots was feared, a few loose planks were thrown across the water, to a small postern, opening from a garden at the back of the building, to afford a convenient egress from the house towards the west. To the

south and east of the tower, was a large, paved court, sufficient to contain five hundred head of cattle in time of danger, and great part of the lower story of the building, was devoted to stables and granaries. the landing place of the narrow, winding stairs, there opened on the first floor an iron bound door, into a large, low hall, lighted only by four casement windows, sunk in recesses in the wall, more than seven feet An oaken table, thirty feet long, occupied the centre of the floor; massive chairs and cupboards stood around the walls, and above them hung military accoutrements; matchlocks and spears, and battle axes, were formed into quaint devices. The wild stag's horns, the skin of the otter, and foxes' tails, coats of mail, leathern jerkens and helmets, occupied a higher place. All was warlike, gloomy, and rude. A kitchen of scarcely less dimensions was at the back of this apartment, with various rooms and offices; and from a long gallery on the second floor, opened the principal bed-chambers.

father of Sir Hugh, had added, about forty years before, a barn-like looking building, to the northern side of the tower, where was the lady's parlour, and several sleeping rooms, superior to those in the original building. It was here Master Carlton was lodged, and much to his satisfaction, enjoyed the convenience of a separate staircase and entrance, but little used by the household.

The chamber of Ellen was near that of her father, on the principal floor of the old tower, and adjoining a turret staircase which descended to the garden. Its oak wainscot, heavy stone chimney, and narrow windows, would have rendered it gloomy and cheerless, had not the blue bed, with its fair, white coverlid, the embroidered covers on the tables and wooden seats, the flowers in pots, and other evidences of female taste, diffused an inexpressible charm, over its rude simplicity. It had once been occupied by Lady Isabel, and the windows

commanded a beautiful view down the valley.

Often had Ellen watched the setting sun from her casement, as it threw its slanting beams over wood and brake, but never had she seen it descend behind the hills, with anxiety so intense, as on that evening, when the flight of every moment brought nearer her appointed meeting with Hubert.

During the afternoon, she had been unable to resume any of her usual occupations; her books lay neglected, her lute and her embroidery were thrown impatiently aside, and the flowers she had that morning gathered were left to wither unheeded. Since the scene at the Manor house, her mind had been so completely occupied by subjects of profound interest, that she had forgotten these pursuits of happy idleness.

Young as she was, she was already on the point of quitting for ever that passionless Eden, where youth, and innocence taste for awhile of happiness, even in this troubled world. Trifles, beautiful however they

might be, could no longer engross her mind, for whilst her heart worshipped all that was pure and noble, she had been plunged suddenly and deeply, into the war of evil. Yet her resolution to defend, nay even to die for the right, was strong and bold; and not a fear glanced across her imagination, when, in the dusk of the evening, she wrapped a woollen scarf over her head and shoulders. descended her turret staircase the garden. Thence she passed by the narrow postern bridge, to the path leading to the banks of the stream, where she hoped that Hubert was awaiting her.

The rays of the moon were mingling with the dusky grey of twilight, as she entered the woods, and the broken shadows of the trees over the uneven ground, and the white mists which flitted past, like spirits, from time to time, along the side of the hill, added to the wild and mysterious character of the scene.

Frequently as she approached the spring, she fancied she saw in some of these chang-

ing forms, the figure of Hubert, but a moment's pause sufficed to undeceive her, and she resumed her way.

Bertram's well, as the fountain rushing from the face of the rock whither she went, was called, was hidden in the deep valley of the Willy Burn, by hanging trees, and thick grown brushwood. But Ellen, who had often been there in her childhood, knew the pathway well. After proceeding some time through the copse, she was about to descend the rocky and difficult steps towards the margin of the water, when she distinctly saw the figure of a man on a little open plot of grass a few paces to her left.

"Hubert!" she cried with a trembling and anxious voice, but no reply was made, and the figure, as if desirous of escaping observation, hurried forward into the darkest part of the thicket.

She paused a moment, somewhat alarmed, but quickly remembering that Saville was probably awaiting her at the bottom of the steps, .she gathered her scarf around her, and descended the moss grown stairs, as rapidly as the ruggedness and moisture of the stones permitted.

At the base of the descent was an old

stone quarry, hewn out of the rocky banks

of the stream, a short distance beyond which lay Bertram's well. To her astonishment the whole of that unfrequented place was lighted by the blaze of a faggot fire, that burnt fiercely, mid-way between her and the fountain. Over the blaze hung, suspended by three sticks, a pot formed of bullock's hide, wherein an old, fat, bandy-legged man, wrapped in a shepherd's plaid, was busily examining the smoking contents; near him stood two horses, one well fed and groomed, the other raw-boned and shaggy.

Ellen hesitated whether to proceed, or to return, when the sound of a voice arrested her steps.

"Yes, yes, Adam, thou art a cunning fellow, a very cunning fellow," were the words she heard—" there can be no doubt of that,

where half a garrison would starve thou wouldst be fat and full, and whilst others scour the country in search of bullocks, thou art wisely putting flesh upon thy bones at home. If my bolt hits no Scotch deer I can knock down a wood-pigeon, in case of need. But by St. Dunstan I must be quick, or I shall have Master Conyers here with an empty stomach, and then adieu to my supper."

So saying, the old man beside the fire, who had uttered this soliloquy, removed the boiling pot from the cross sticks, and placing it on the ground, deliberately seated himself on a low stone, with his legs on either side of the smoking vessel, and drawing forth a wooden spoon from his girdle, commenced devouring the almost boiling mess it contained, with astonishing rapidity.

Ellen stood several minutes in the shadow of the bushes, undecided how to act, and watching with wonder and curiosity a proceeding so extraordinary at such a time, and in such a place. She was, however, quickly disturbed, by a soft, low whistle, from the opposite side of the brake. The effect this sound produced upon the old man, was instantaneous, but instead of attempting to arise, in obedience to the signal, he only redoubled the velocity, with which he thrust spoonful after spoonful of the scalding pottage into his mouth. But in spite of his puffing and grimaces, he had made but little progress, when Ellen beheld the graceful figure of a boy, come from an opposite path, into the full glare of the fire, whose face and form, she distinguished with wonder and admiration, even in that lurid light, were more lovely than any she had ever before seen in woman. The delicate grace, the beauty, nay even the dress of this figure, she felt were foreign to that wild country; and the southern accent in which addressed the old man, confirmed this idea.

"Up, Adam! up and away," were the words of the boy, as he approached, "this is no hour for feasting. By the saints I

must bring a younger guide the next time I ride over the hills, for a Scot might send an arrow through thy brain, and have the horses over the border, whilst thou art spending thy breath to cool thy porridge. Master Conyers will be at thy heels ere long, and then I warrant thy soup kettle will vanish in a trice!"

- "And so shall it now, young master," was the old man's prompt reply, though he eagerly thrust another spoonful into his mouth, without making the slightest effort to arise.
- "I trust, at least, you have not forgotten the horses, whilst you have been taking care of yourself?" said mistress Marion, for it was she, passing on at once to the spot where the animals were fastened to the stump of an old tree, and beginning to arrange the harness of her palfrey, which welcomed her with a neigh of pleasure.
- "Master! master! that is my work!" cried Adam now attempting to roll round on to his knees in order to regain his feet.

"It may be so," returned the maiden with indifference, as she continued her preparations, "but it seems you prefer the indulgence of your appetite, and I must be my own groom, and leave thee to follow when the kettle is empty. This is no place for me to tarry, and you must answer to master Conyers, as you are best able, for your delay.

"By Blackbeard, and Whitebeard, and St. Dunstan, and all the saints, I am coming," cried the ancient trooper, scrambling on his feet, and snatching up his kettle to serve on some more convenient occasion; but before he could arrive to give his assistance to the maiden, she had her foot in the stirrup, and vaulting lightly into her saddle, desired him to make all speed.

"Mount—mount quickly," she cried; "I will tarry two minutes for you, and no longer," and whilst Adam hastily arranged his horse's bit and bridle, she made a turn on her impatient palfrey around the open space between the fire and the woods.

Ellen marked with wonder the skill with which she rode in boyish fashion, and kept her eyes fixed upon her light and graceful form, half doubtful if her senses were not deluded by the witchery of some supernatural being from the realms of night; but ere she had encompassed half the circle, the dark branches of the trees at the opposite side were pushed suddenly apart, and there, in the broad light of the flames, stood Master Richard Carlton.

A black mantle covered nearly the whole of his person, but his small velvet cap left his features fully exposed to view. The horror there depicted was fearful, as he fixed his eyes wildly upon Marion, whose face was, alone, distinctly visible amidst the flame and flitting smoke of the faggots, pale, sad, and beautiful as an unearthly vision.

The terror of Ellen at the appearance of Carlton was extreme! yet in spite of her fears, she remained as if rivetted to the spot, by the intense interest of the scene that was passing before her. Yet whatever might be her well grounded apprehensions of this bad man, and the reasonable fears excited by his presence at such a time, and place, her feelings were weak indeed, when compared with the horror which seemed to freeze the very heart of Marion, when her eyes first fell upon his form. A faint shriek burst from her blanched lips, the horse and its rider drew back as if in the presence of an evil spirit, and remained for a few seconds fixed as stone. But Marion, more prepared than Carlton for the apparition she beheld, had no sooner marked his terror, than recovering the presence of mind which rarely forsook her, she raised her hand with a threatening gesture towards heaven, then pronouncing in a firm, distinct, and solemn voice, the words, "there shall the just and the unjust meet again, before the Judgment seat," urged forward her palfrey, and in another moment vanished into the deep obscurity of the woods.

Carlton made no movement, he uttered

no word, but the hues of death were on his brow, and the pangs of hell within his For the first time in his life, he had fears of the futurity he had scorned till then, and the darkest terrors of superstition, for a few moments, usurped entire dominion over his powerful and essentially temporal He felt that in eternity, were powers he knew not of, to which the boasted strength of man, in all his pride and vain glory, was as a dried leaf before the rushing strength of the torrent: he felt that for the soul. were other states of being, of which men know nothing, though vengeance and punishment there await them, for the deeds done in the flesh! he felt that the intact and subtle air, was, in defiance of all human sense, peopled with forms invisible, to whom the secrets of the most cunning mind were clear as day, and crimes forgotten by the criminal, as fresh in their enormity, as at the hour of their perpetration.

Such a spirit, in his first terror, he scarcely doubted he had seen; but when his mind

had gradually recovered its powers, when he observed the marks of footsteps on the sand, the ashes of the waning fire still glowing amidst the darkness, and saw the remains of food amongst the trodden grass, other thoughts, scarcely less strange and bewildering, came over his brain, and walking slowly round the area of the old stone quarry, he took mark, with fearful interest, of every evidence of the recent presence of human beings

of the recent presence of human beings.

Twice he approached within a few paces of the hiding place of Ellen; and though the fire had sunk so low, that she could no longer distinguish the agonized expression of his convulsed features, his hurried and abrupt movements sufficed to convince her, that he was distracted by some terrible conflict of the passions. All her former fears of Carlton were ten times multiplied by this awful scene, and yet she dared not fly. She felt that danger, the most imminent, would result from his discovering, that she had been a witness of his agony, and scarcely venturing to draw her breath, as he passed, she

stood motionless as a statue, in her hiding place.

At length, to her infinite relief, the Secretary himself departed. Thrice she heard low, appalling oaths of vengeance breathed from his lips, whilst he gazed on the spot where Marion had disappeared; and thrice she heard him denounce curses on his own head, for his weakness and his folly; and then still muttering between his teeth, words of unintelligible meaning, he ascended a path amongst the rocks. He had forgotten those whom he came thither to watch.

Eagerly did she listen till his footsteps were no longer audible on the still air of the tranquil night, and then pushing aside the branches, she at length ventured to come forth into the open space at the foot of the quarry. The time of her appointed meeting with Hubert Saville was past, yet unwilling that another night should pass ere she had spoken with him, on many subjects of deep importance to them both, she determined to continue her way to the spring,

side.

hoping that in spite of her long delay, he might still be awaiting there. Ere she had proceeded far, and whilst she once more paused to listen if all were still around, she heard her own name softly pronounced, and in another moment Hubert was at her

"Ah, Ellen! dearest Ellen," he cried, as unforbidden he clasped her, in the first tumult of his joy, to his heart, "now can I indeed believe that the beloved companion of my childhood, hath not forgotten me! that the angel who soothed my youthful sorrows, does not deny her sympathy to the trials of my riper years! Ellen," he continued with passionate ardour, when he felt her tears fall fast upon his shoulder, "is it possible you love me? is it possible the wild dreams of my solitude have not been all vain! and that I may venture to hope, I am not alone upon the face of the earth! Is it possible that after two years of absence, the image of a being so humble, friendless, poor and unendowed, can still hold a place in the heart

of a noble maiden like thee, amidst all the adulations and flatteries of a court?"

"Hubert," she softly returned, "if you knew their falsehood and their worthlessness, as well as I do, you would have no fears they could have charms for me!"

"But Ellen," he replied, "you were young -very young when we parted-we had never spoken of love, and what right had I to think,--what right have I now to hope, that I hold any place in your heart. I might forget my poverty, and the mystery that hangs over my birth, when we were formerly together, as if alone upon earth, with no being near us to remind us of the artificial distinctions of society; no voice to warn me of the gulf that lay between the friendless and portionless child of mystery, and the rich daughter of a powerful knight; but when you departed Ellen, and the fearful realities unfolded, with time, before me, I felt how different was your destined course and mine, and hope died in my heart.

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"And you forgot me, Hubert?" murmured the soft voice of the lady.

"That was impossible," he replied, "though I rarely thought of you without agony-I treasured vour remembrance—what had I else to cherish? what had I else to love? and day by day I felt, in my solitary dreams, that my whole soul was devoted unto thee. despair was maddening, yet what had I to hope for ?—the protracted misery of a clois-Happen what would, I resolved at ter! least to escape that certain slavery, and a year has now passed, since I swore in secret a solemn oath, that no power of friends nor enemies, should ever compel me to become a priest. No, Ellen no! though I had no hope, I lacked the power to bring thy fair image as a sacrifice to the foot of the cross! passion was strong in my heart, and I felt that I must perish, ere it were annihilated. For a year I have hoarded a portion of the profits of my labours, hoping day after day to find an occasion to travel hence to London. You were there, Ellen—I scarcely

dared to think that we should meet, but you were there, and as by the presence of an angel, the place seemed hallowed! two days more, and I had departed from these wilds, where we have been so blest in childhood, and in youth together, to prove the hazards of this changeful world. And when my heart was saddest, my despair most deep, thou hast returned, true to the memory of our early days."

"And to our early love," murmured the girl, in accents which conveyed a rapture the most intense to the heart of Hubert.

"May all good angels reward thee, my own Ellen," he returned, "none but a heart so noble, and so pure as thine, could be capable of such a feeling; but, oh dearest, whatever may be our destiny, whatever future trials the world may have in store for us, let it be a consolation, a happiness to thee, to know that thou hast rendered one human being on the face of the earth supremely happy, that thou hast plucked the rankling thorns of doubt, and agony, and desolation,

from one poor bleeding heart, and with thy love bestowed on it, the power to struggle with untiring courage, against the ills of life.

- "And thou hast need of courage, Hubert; thou hast need of resolution; thou hast need of our love, to sustain thee against the machinations, and the wicked strength of the man whom even whilst ignorant of our attachment, an evil chance, has, I fear, already made your enemy!"
- "Is it to Master Carlton you allude?" demanded Saville.
- "Yes, to Master Carlton," answered Ellen, "to the friend of my father, the heir, in default of a nearer male relative, to my father's land, the professed suitor of his daughter, and the avaricious coveter of her mother's inheritance, and Lady Isabel's broad fields and hoarded gold—without the hope of which her hand would have little value in his eyes."
- "And is it possible, Sir Hugh can favour the addresses of such a man?" demanded Hubert eagerly.

"Perchance you know not," she returned, "that my father cannot touch the fortune of my mother, which is my inheritance; and that his own coffers are drained to the very dregs. Lady Isabel, ever persuaded that she shall live to see her eldest son, or his heirs, restored to the wealth and honors of the family, when the persecution of the friends of the house of Lancaster has ceased, refuses to advance Master Carlton, who openly him money. scoffs at the lady's delusion, as he calls it, and professes his belief that Sir Hugh must ere long inherit her property, has lent him vast sums to secure his consent to his marriage with me. How I know all this, it matters not, but I do know, though I blush to confess it, that my father has sold his child for a portion of her inheritance, and an entire release from his debts to my intended husband. You may perhaps marvel, how Master Carlton has so much wealth at command, but you will cease to do so, when I tell you, that he has been engaged in the intrigues of all parties, during the

twenty years of our sad civil wars, and that innumerable affairs of forfeitures and ransoms, and compositions of treason, have passed through his hands, leaving large profits. Other stories are likewise current, yet more to his dishonor; but let it suffice to say, he is respected by no man, though many bow

before him, who need his services."

"And is he not in the king's employ?"
inquired Hubert.

"He is the private Secretary of Richard the Third," replied Ellen. "His Majesty has been indebted to him for the negotiation of certain rich loans from the city; and the Queen Dowager had formerly to thank him for the means of portioning several of her poor relations. Nevertheless he has failed in two attempts to marry rich Wards of the Crown! thence is it, that his serpent eyes have fixed on me. To forward his schemes, and to be assured of the extent of my fortune, he has brought my father from the court, to the north country, at such a season."

"Has he ever ventured openly to profess his intentions to yourself?" asked the young man anxiously.

"Once, and once only, about three months ago," was the reply, "and you Hubert, who have only seen me in my gentle moods, would have been surprised, had you heard the scorn and ridicule with which I treated his gallantry, or love, as he was pleased to call his audacious avarice. It was not wise perchance, to be thus frank with such a man, but it is my nature, and were I to have died instantly, I could not have listened tranquilly to the insulting mockery of his professions."

"How did he bear such treatment?"

"Most coolly and most calmly! He smiled, and then I knew the secret venom in his heart was twenty times more poisonous than before. And still he smiles, though every day I feel his subtle chains are winding closer and more closely round me. I am selfish, very selfish, Hubert, to seek to draw you, likewise, within the poisoned circle of his evil influence, but without your aid, I

feel I have no power to extricate myself from his spells. To my father I dare not appeal, for he is Carlton's slave; to Lady Isabel I dread to apply, lest her strong passions, little short of madness, might aggravate my danger; the king, to whom in extreme necessity I should not lack the courage to petition, has not a heart to feel for women's sufferings, and Carlton is his favourite and trusted agent. To whom, then, can I look in such distress, save unto you."

"And by my hopes of heaven, you shall never find that your confidence has been misplaced," returned the young man, passionately; and with all the energy of recovered hope, and the exulting sense of youthful strength and dauntless courage, he continued. "Yes, Ellen! from this moment, my heart, my arm, my life, are yours, and yours alone; and I swear to you, that ere you are made Carlton's wife, this body must be crumbling in the grave! But fear it not; that hour will never come, for God in his wise justice

lends a strength to innocence, before which the guilty must at length crouch down, crushed by their weight of sin."

- "Hush Hubert! hush! methought I heard a rustling amidst yonder bushes."
- "Ha! if we are watched, it shall cost dear to him who plays the paltry eavesdropper!" exclaimed Saville, and ere Ellen could reply, or even stretch out her hand to arrest his flight, he snatched a short dagger from his girdle and plunged into the thick covert, whence it appeared the sounds had proceeded.

The fire had now expired, the moon had set, and clouds had gathered over the stars, leaving all earth in solemn darkness. As Ellen stood alone, and trembling for the result of her imprudent exclamation, she heard the crash of the branches on every side, as Hubert forced his way amongst the the brushwood. By degrees, as the sounds, further and further off, marked his solitary progress, she began to flatter herself with the hope that her suspicions had been

groundless, when like an arrow from a bow, she heard the rushing of footsteps from the western copse, and she indistinctly perceived the shadow of a human figure, dart past her, and rush up the rocky steps she had descended thither. Then all was once more silent as before, save when Hubert, after a fruitless search, forced his way back through the copse.

- "Have you seen nought?" she eagerly demanded, as he regained her side.
- "Nothing but an owl I frightened from its roost," was his reply.
- "The saints be praised," she returned, "and yet I did not err, for not three minutes since a figure darted past me through the wood, and fled like an evil spirit from the morn."
 - "Why did you not call me!"
- "It saw me not, and whoever it might be, it was better to let it pass tranquilly, than to provoke a needless and perhaps fatal strife."
 - "Yet Ellen, ere I joined you first this

evening, I saw that miscreant Carlton, here, in the light of the blazing fire," said Hubert, eagerly.

"Yes, and I saw him likewise," rejoined Ellen, "which I had told you ere now, had not other thoughts, and more pressing interests engaged my attention. Did you too behold the fair phantom before which he stood appalled? methought, though in the garments of a boy, it had a woman's features."

"And thou wert right," was Hubert's reply, for he too had been a witness to the whole scene of Marion's departure, and greatly astonished by Carlton's evident recognition of the outlaw's fair and delicate messenger. "I have met that mysterious being ere now, I would tell thee where, and when, did I not fear that hidden listeners yet may be lurking near us, and that the secret is another's, not mine own. But I confess, I am utterly ignorant how Carlton could have any previous knowledge of this girl."

"There is some fearful story doubtlessly attached to this dark mystery," returned Ellen, with a slight shudder, "and were I to live a thousand years, I could never forget the girl's voice, nor his countenance of horror, when she denounced a future judgment."

"Let us be silent, Ellen, I beg, concerning all we have witnessed, even to Lady Isabel," said Hubert, solemnly, "believe me, I have reasons for this caution, though on the contrary, all that concerns ourselves I would most gladly confide to her."

"I fear we can expect no aid from her!" answered the lady, sadly. "I scarcely dare to say it, Hubert, but she is proud, very proud, and though I know she hates this Carlton as much as I detest him, I fear she would never sanction any alliance for her grand-daughter, except with blood as noble as her own."

"And she is right, dear Ellen! your family would seek with justice to match you even near the throne, and I only so much

the more desire, that Lady Isabel should not be kept in ignorance of our attachment. Vast is the debt of gratitude I owe her, and I would sooner die, than requite it by deception. I should despise myself."

"But should she refuse to sanction our love?" demanded the girl eagerly.

"We must submit, nor in our passion forget all sense of duty," returned the young man; and as Ellen listened to his words, though painful was their import, she exulted in this proof of noble sentiment, in him, whom she had chosen to be the companion of her life. "Time and submission may at length win her consent," he continued "for a heart so feeling as hers, can never long persist in causing the utter misery of those she loves; and in the meantime she, and she nlone, can defend you from Carlton's bold pretences."

"You are right, Hubert—I feel you are right, and to-morrow let the disclosure be made," she replied. "Methinks she will be

London."

more indulgent, if the tale be told by you:
and in good sooth, I dare not do it."

"Then I will be the messenger," said Hubert. "Father Ambrose requires my services till then, and I must not annoy him by any

apparent neglect lest he join with Carlton to

irritate your father against me. He is already sufficiently enraged by the announcement of my resolution to depart for

"Yet you will not hurry thither, now Hubert," said Ellen, in a soft, low voice of entreaty.

"I will never desert you, Ellen! you cannot believe it," was his half reproachful reply.

"Ah, Hubert, it would indeed be dreadful, were you to leave me, yet we dare meet but seldom, and even now must part. The night is waning fast, and I fear I have already been abroad too long."

"Yet, here we cannot say farewell," answered her lover. "That there are others abroad, besides ourselves, we have already

had convincing proof, and I cannot leave you to pass alone through the wild paths, between this spot and the tower."

It was in vain that Ellen opposed Hubert's determination to accompany her to her home, and with rapid steps, they proceeded together to the little bridge, leading to the garden of her fathers dwelling. darkness rendered it impossible that he could be observed from the windows, and the appearance of Carlton in the woods that night, had left a feeling of terror on Ellen's mind, which though she forbore to express it, made her secretly fearful of returning over the hills alone. Moreover, it was happiness to prolong, even for this brief space, the presence of Hubert. pressure of his hand, as her arm rested upon his, the sound of his voice amidst the obscurity of the tranquil night, imparted to her young heart, a bliss so pure, so full, that all the difficulties that threatened them were forgotten, in the ecstasy of the passing moment.

The lights beaming from Carlton's windows as they approached, warned her, however, that the moment of separation had arrived, and the lovers at length unwillingly parted, under the shadow of the walls, with many assurances of affection. The last words of Saville, were to appoint a meeting near the cottage of the miller, on the evening of the following day.

CHAPTER XI.

Whilst Ellen ascended the turret stair to her chamber, after she parted form Hubert, two men were keeping watch over the movements of the lovers, from a grated window in an old guard room, beside the Postern.

Sir Hugh Collingwood and Master Carlton had been stationed there for more than a quarter of an hour, eagerly awaiting the return of the lovers, and the light left burning in the apartment of the Secretary, was only a snare to cheat them to security. Every word they uttered at parting, was distinctly audible to the watchers' attentive ears, and Carlton had the utmost difficulty in restraining the angry impatience of the Knight, when he heard the repeated expression of their love.

"At length you believe me, Sir Hugh," he said, when all was again silent, "that at least is some satisfaction. It appears this young man has less vocation to the Church, than you have been persuaded to believe. In truth, the Lady Isabel has introduced your daughter to pretty company!"

"Confound the audacious varlet!" exclaimed the Knight, still too irritated to hold reasonable discourse, "were he bound to a cart, and whipped through the village, it would be too good for him. But he shall repent this insolence, if I die for it."

"Something must be done, that is clear," returned Carlton, who had now made visible the light of his lantern; "but methinks,

we have been long enough in this dark hole for rats and toads, so with your permission, Sir Hugh, we will adjourn our council to my chamber, where there is still a faggot blazing on the hearth, and a cup of spiced wine to season our discourse."

"You are right," was Sir Hugh's blunt reply, as he strode after his guest, from their hiding place. "Whatever induced me to marry, I know not, for by the mass, if there is a curse upon earth, to punish a man for his sins, it is a daughter. When he has tutored, and fed, and clothed her for a score of years, and in good sooth has a right to expect some return for all his pains, the minx turns restive, talks of love, and such folly; and for the sake of some penniless, beardless, baseborn knave, would see her father hung between two thieves at Tyburn, before she would stretch out a finger to save him."

"And yet excuse me, Sir Hugh," returned the courtier, "but a father is often much to blame for his child's disobedience."

"By the saints, Master Carlton, what do

mean by such language?" cried the Knight turning suddenly round.

"Nothing that need offend you, only it appears to me, you have been too gentle, too indulgent, to this girl. Pray let us be seated," he said, entering the chamber, and pointing to the chairs near the table, on which still stood a huge jug of mulled wine, and the half emptied glass of the Knight.

Sir Hugh obeyed without reply, and when the Secretary had taken his place, opposite to him, he thus continued, "we are relations and old friends, and it is my duty to speak plain on this subject, for it has indeed grieved me to see, that my cousin Ellen has been too much left to be spoilt by that old termagant Lady Isabel, whilst it seems she had inherited enough of her headstrong nature, to have had need of a pretty tight rein."

"There you speak truth!" cried the angry father, "and she shall be taught better for the future. She shall be locked up in a chamber on the third story, with nothing but bread and water, to tame her."

- "And she will get out by the window," rejoined the Secretary, coolly, "no, no, that would only make matters worse, now they have gone so far. Provoke a woman's anger, and her ingenuity will outwit you, depend upon it. If you sincerely wish your daughter should become my wife, we must go to work in another manner."
- "Let me hear your plan," said the Knight, sullenly, for indolent and impatient, he frequently considered the fine drawn intrigues of Master Carlton as very unnecessary, and very dangerous mystifications, and delays.
- "It is with the youth we must begin," was the reply, "I frankly tell you I don't understand your conduct about this Hubert Saville. Notwithstanding our long intimacy, notwithstanding the important circumstances which have united our interests, you have hitherto left me in entire ignorance of the existence of such a being, though since my

arrival here, I have learnt enough to convince me, that he has been under your protection from his infancy; you have allowed him to creep into the favour and affections of your mother, till even the village gossips name him for her heir. Ah start! but it is true. You have been a witness of his insolence to me, and his bold attentions to your daughter, and yet you leave him to pursue his course at pleasure, and talk of locking up your daughter upon bread and water, as a sufficient remedy for all these ills."

"I have only learnt to day, this youth's refusal to enter a monastery," answered the Knight, "but by the mass he shall be compelled to do so."

"Methinks even that is unnecessary, if he be your own son, as the neighbourhood believes," returned the Secretary, fixing his piercing eyes upon his host with a searching glance, which bold as he was, he shrank from encountering. "Ah true—true," stammered Sir Hugh, on whose brain the potent draughts of the evening were beginning to take effect, "if he be my own son, there is nothing, as you say, to fear between him and Ellen. Brother and sister! most capital! brother and sister! that is a salve for every ill!" and he laughed long and loud, as if triumphing in the discovery of a new and admirable expedient.

"And if he be not your own son, in the name of all the saints who is this young varlet?" demanded Carlton eagerly, his curiosity now more than ever excited by the strange conduct of the Knight.

"Ah! if he be not my own son, who is he!" he replied, still laughing loudly, "that is a pretty question truly, to ask a father! As long as he is not my heir, you may be content without asking further questions, methinks! but let me tell you, sir, 'it is a wise child who knows his own father,' especially in these wild times."

"By the mass, if he be your son, what need for so much mystery?" said the secretary calmly, for he saw that all angry expostulation would be entirely useless with his host, in his present confused, and half intoxicated state. "No man now-a-days need be ashamed of being the father of a brave and handsome youth, whether his mother wore a wedding ring, or not, and I cannot understand your mystery and hesitation on this point."

- "My mother, Master Carlton, my mother is strict in these matters," returned Sir Hugh, with a cunning twinkling of the eye, "and when my wife was alive, poor lady—"
- "But she is gone to the angels, long ago, peace be unto her," answered the courtier impatiently, "and moreover, it is not necessary to publish the story; I will put you on a better plan than that."
- "To-morrow!" muttered the knight, making a last effort to unclose his heavy eyes.
- "Ay, to-morrow, thou art right," returned Carlton, "I see it is no use casting more

pearls before swine at present," and taking up the lamp, he left his host to his slumbers, and entered the little chamber adjoining, which was appropriated to the transaction of his private affairs. He advanced, by the feeble rays of the light he carried, to the further end of the apartment, and having taken, from an oaken desk, the papers with which it was his intention to occupy himself for some hours of the night, he turned to approach the table. He then first perceived that a man was sitting, apparently asleep, in a small recess near the door.

For a moment Carlton felt alarmed, but raising his lamp to take a better survey of the intruder, he speedily recognised the stranger.

"Ha, art thou there!" he cried, and apparently awakened by the voice, the sleeper arose, and displayed in his broad and athletic proportions, the powerful figure of Marston Conyers, attired as Hubert had recently seen him in the miller's hovel.



VOL. I.

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The contrast between the slender and elegantly dressed person of the polished courtier, and that of the rude, and half savage-looking moss-trooper, was striking in the extreme, but though the manner of the one had all the refinement of the highest breeding, and that of the other was abrupt, and almost ungracious, as he returned his salutation, there was more true nobility in the stern and simple soldier-like address of the outlaw, than in all the studied suavity of his hypocritical host.

"You seem surprised to see me, Master Carlton," he abruptly began, "but if I understood your letter rightly, you appointed ten o'clock to-night as the hour for me to be here, and I have been punctual! how long I have been kept sleeping, I know not."

"In truth I owe you many apologies for my delay," returned the Secretary, "but affairs of importance, unexpectedly demanded my presence elsewhere. I was not aware on my return, of your arrival, and the company of Sir Hugh Collingwood—"

- "Enough! Enough!" cried the outlaw, hastily interrupting him, "there is no need of ceremony between us. As I understand the affair, you have summoned me hither for your interests, and I have come here for mine own; and had it not suited my convenience, I had not waited a quarter of an hour for your pleasure, you may depend on it. It seems you have need of soldiers, Master Carlton?"
- "To collect a troop for the King's service is the object of my journey hither," was the reply.
- "But have you the authority of the King, or a warrant from the proper officers," coolly returned the outlaw. "My people, I tell you candidly, have no inclination to incur anew the penalties of rebellion, by appearing unlawfully in arms, they know not why, or wherefore; and they must be sure of his Majesty's favour, before they put an arrow in their quivers."

"I have King Richard the Third's commission for levying soldiers," was the Secretary's answer, "or I had not presumed on such a course. The papers are here, ready for your inspection, if you doubt my word," and he took a scroll from those he held in his hand, and spread it before his guest.

It was a copy of the address afterwards published by proclamation to the whole kingdom,* calling upon all the natural and true subjects of his Majesty's realm, to arm themselves, and be ready at an hour's warning, to attend upon his person, in defence of the King, the church, and the realm, against the false traitor, Henry, Earl of Richmond.

"This is very well, Master Carlton!" said the soldier coolly folding up the paper when he had perused it, "but you must be well aware, there is no power at hand to compel wild roving men like myself, and my comrades, to march forth from our fastnesses

^{*} See Paston's letters.

against our will and pleasure; and I must tell you, it is not our will and pleasure to forsake the plunder of the Scottish border, for a hungry campaign against Henry Tudor, if we are not first assured of being well paid for our trouble."

- "Depend on it, there are silly lords enough will join his party, to make rich forfeitures, after their defeat," answered Carlton, "and Richard is a generous paymaster to his friends."
- "Yet, when the Duke of Buckingham demanded his lands, in right of his mother, though he had put the crown upon his head, he let him plead in vain, and sent him to the scaffold as his sole reward."
- "The Duke was a proud, vain rebel, whom nothing could content short of the throne itself."
- "Yet he professed to fight for Henry Tudor," rejoined the moss-trooper, "and let me tell you, sir, that King Richard's success is this time more uncertain, for rumours have reached even our hills, that many nobles

and gentlemen, not silly lords as you assert, but valiant men and wise, have crossed the seas to join Earl Henry's standard, whilst many more are ready to take arms in his cause, as soon as he has stepped on English ground. By my faith, if plunder is to be our only pay, I would as soon fight for Tudor as for Richard."

"Your intelligence is false," said the Secretary. "The King is well assured this invasion is only a miserable effort, easily to be crushed by a handful of his trusty followers; but he is too wise a politician, not to take all possible precautions against danger."

"Yes, in truth men say, that since his nephews died in the Tower of London, he wears a corselet noon and night, hath his hand still ready to return a blow, and moves his wily eyes for ever round in search of enemies."

"You seem to hear strange tales in these northern wilds," replied the courtier, "but they are the mere fabrications of the Lancastrians, depend on that, for to one who comes directly from the court they are as new, as fresh money issued from a false coiner's die. I heard of nothing there, but Richard's noble bounties, and the rich loan the citizens of London, with all good will, had given him. Of his success with the rebel Richmond, there cannot be the slightest doubt, for all the wealth and power of the kingdom are at his disposal. Yet the civil war offers an occasion for the manifestation of loyalty and zeal to his royal person, of which, those who lie under the shadow of old suspicions, or those who wish to win honour at court, will do well to avail themselves."

"If you mean to class me with the former," answered Conyers coolly, "I tell you frankly, we border troopers have no fear of royal displeasure; and if, with the latter, learn once for all, that I prefer sleeping on a sheep's skin on a wide moor, to resting on a bed of down, in a royal palace."

"Then why have you thought it worth your while to come hither, in answer to my letter?" demanded the courtier.

"Because my people lack employment at this season, and would be well content if there is fighting going on, to take a part in the fray, provided they are assured of being well paid for their trouble."

"I have already told you to be tranquil on the score of gain," was Carlton's reply. "The plunder of the whole kingdom will be open to the King's troops, when once the standard of rebellion is raised, and if you had heard me patiently to the end, you would have known, ere now, the offers of pay which I am authorised to make you, provided you are ready to march in a week with five hundred tall men, in harness and arms, such as are here in use, to join the troops of the Duke of Norfolk, who is marshalling his forces for the King. These are the terms of service," he added, giving another paper to Conyers, as he ceased speaking.

The moss-trooper took the paper without answering, and drawing a chair to the table sat down close to the lamp to peruse its contents.

Carlton watched him with profound attention as he did so, not only that he was anxious to observe from his countenance, if he were satisfied with the propositions of the King, which in fact were highly advantageous, and such as if possible to elude, he never had any intention to fulfil, but also to discover by a more exact survey of his guest, if he were a man to be trusted in an enterprise of a totally different character. It was an affair, in which he would willingly have been himself the only actor; but after mature consideration he was convinced that to be certain of success, he had need of aid, such as could be only given by an outlaw like Convers, and half-a-dozen of his desperate companions. He liked the bluntness of this man's discourse—he liked his cautious bargaining for himself and his men. It was

plainly to be seen, he thought, that no scruples of conscience interfered with his pursuit of gain, when it was once clearly assured to him. His profession, he was persuaded, was plunder; his whole life was devoted to the exercise of lawless might and rapine; and the reward to be won by the deed to which he wished to tempt him, was so great, that he felt assured, it could not fail to silence the reproaches of any lingering, conscientious feeling in the outlaw's mind.

But still he hesitated, when Conyers hastily arose, and holding forth his hand as he quickly advanced towards him, exclaimed, "these are brave terms, and I am ready at once to strike a bargain for the King, for such a sum as here is specified."

Carlton gave him his hand with affected frankness, though he shrunk from the iron grasp of the outlaw.

"Then you engage," he said, "to join me in a week at Rothbury, with five hundred men?"

"Ay! tall men and true, as ever handled

an axe, or drew a bow," returned Conyers, "but I must have our compact signed and sealed, Master Carlton, before I stir a finger in the matter."

- "That shall be done forthwith!" cried the Secretary, snatching up his pen.
- "And remember, if our pay fails a day," said Conyers, "we go over to the enemy.
- "You shall have full liberty to do so, in such a case; but I have no fear of your desertion," he replied, looking up as he continued rapidly to complete the copy of the contract desired by the soldier. "In the mean time," he added, after all was finished in due order, "there is another little affair, in which I have pressing need of your assistance!"
- "Umph!" was the exclamation of the moss-trooper, as he regarded his host with a keen glance, "and what may that be, Master Carlton?"
- "A mere personal business," returned the Secretary, "yet one in which the profits will be undoubted and considerable, both to

you and to me. But I acknowledge it is somewhat dangerous, and caution and secrecy are indispensably necessary, not only to secure our success, but our indemnity."

- "Are many hands necessary, besides our own?"
- "The fewer the better! but I fear in case of surprise, we must have six well-armed men with us."
 - "Ha! then there is likely to be fighting?"
- "Not much of that, in good sooth, except with women's tongues, and if you are of my way of thinking, they should be silenced at the very offset of the fray."
- "We moss-troopers wage no war with womankind! we leave that to you gallant courtiers," said Conyers with a cold scorn, which in a moment convinced Carlton that he had gone too far.
- "And we only wage it in the way of kindness," he hastily replied, anxious to retrieve the fault he had inadvertently committed.
 - "Then by the mass, what are you driving

at, with all this mystery?" cried the soldier.

- "At a good rich foray—all in your own way of business, only on this side the border instead of the other," returned his host with a soft laugh.
- "Ah! ha! robbery! if we wish to speak plain language. Am I not right?" answered the outlaw, without betraying the slightest disgust, or unwillingness to listen further to the Secretary's proposition.
- "Call it what you please," returned the other carelessly, "but when I tell you the enormous amount of the plunder to be divided between us, I imagine you will not quarrel about a name."
- "Nor about the booty neither!" rejoined the outlaw with a soft laugh. "But where is this rich prize to be found?"
- "Not far from here!" answered the courtier, "but hark!" he cried, suddenly pausing, when he heard steps in the adjoining chamber, "Sir Hugh has awoke."
 - "Sir Hugh! by all the saints and devils

what has the drunken knight to do, playing eaves-dropper at such an hour."

"He fell asleep, when more than half intoxicated, in my chamber," was Carlton's hasty reply.

"Thunder and lightning, Master Secretary, why have you carried off the light?" at this moment exclaimed the half bewildered knight, and they could plainly distinguish that he came stumbling and staggering in the dark, towards the door.

"Conyers, he must not find you here!" whispered the Secretary. "Confound him, if he had only left us in peace another quarter of an hour! his hand is on the lock, and I cannot refuse to open to him. What is to be done?"

"Puff out the light and I can pass him unperceived, and make the best of my way back to the hills!" responded the outlaw, and suiting the action to the word, there was utter darkness in the chamber, when Master Carlton, affecting to awaken from a

profound sleep, first answered to the repeated calls of the Knight.

"And in the name of fortune, what have you put out the candle for, when we most need it?" cried Sir Hugh, when he observed the ray, by which he had been guided to the door, disappear from the key-hole.

"Curse on my awkwardness!" exclaimed the courtier. "I have upset the lamp in my haste; but patience, Sir Hugh, patience, I will strike another light in an instant. The flint is on the chimney there without."

Then, laying his arm upon that of the outlaw before he withdrew the bolt, he whispered clearly and distinctly in his ear, "You must not return here; but if you wish to hear further, to-morrow evening, at nine o'clock, I will meet you at St. John's Cross."

"Not there, but I will wait for you at the old stone quarry," answered Conyers, in the same zone.

Carlton started! he remembered the fearful apparition of the preceding night, and would gladly have named another place of rendezvous, but it was too late; he had already turned the key, and Sir Hugh, with loud vociferations, instantly pulled the door wide upon its hinges.

The moss-trooper sprang forward, in hopes of escaping undetected; but the Knight groping about with outstretched arms, unluckily came in contact with his mantle of sheep's-skin, and seizing it with a grasp of iron, exclaimed, "By St. George, have we a wolf in sheep's clothing, or one of the black woolled devils of Rimside amongst us?"

"You are dreaming, Sir Hugh," responded the Secretary, adroitly aiding the escape of his visiter from the unmerciful grasp of the Knight, "and if you hold me so tight by the mantle, it will be impossible you can have a light till sunrise."

"Your mantle; ay, by my faith, it must be your mantle, for my hands are full of hairs. Yet I thought I heard your voice to the right of me, and I will be sworn there were steps to the left. I have as often seen double in my life, as any other strong Knight north of the Humber, but it is the first time I ever heard double since I was born."

"Yet, probably both may arise from the same cause," returned his guest, laughing loudly, and making as much noise as possible, ere he lighted the lamp; and the Knight, who was always merry, when he had made large potations, joined in his pretended gaiety, with a sincerity and rude glee, which made the walls of the building echo. he was not so readily deceived as Master Carlton believed. He had distinctly heard voices, ere he had given any signs of wakefulness, and when, after the lamp was lighted, he compared the sheep's wool he still held in his hand, with the dark fur on the dress of the Secretary, he laughed far more, at this detection of his hypocrisy, than from any sympathy with his wit.

Quietly pocketting the piece of wool, as an evidence to be produced on some other occasion, he glanced around to observe if any other trace of its wearer remained in the chamber, well convinced that to question Master Carlton, was only to betray his suspicions, without procuring any satisfaction That his guest carried for his curiosity. on many intrigues, of which he was ignorant, he had long been convinced, and that he had the right to do so, he was ready to admit: but that he should receive secret visits at midnight, under his roof, and one who, by his sheep-skin garb, was, probably, a moss-trooper, was more than he could submit to in patient ignorance, especially when the extreme duplicity made use of, led him to suspect that some mischief was plotting against himself.

Carlton believed that by furnishing the Knight with money in his moments of urgent necessity, he had him entirely at his command; but Sir Hugh was not a man to place himself knowingly in the power of any living creature, and he well knew, when he incurred these obligations, that he had a

means of extricating himself always at command, of which the courtier, with all his cunning, had not the remotest suspicion.

His brief sleep, and the circumstances accompanying his awakening, had once more given him the entire command over his faculties, and instead, therefore, of returning to his own chamber, he remained to arrange with his guest, the means necessary to forward his marriage with Ellen, which, for various reasons, they had both sincerely at heart. They were equally convinced of the necessity of putting an end to her intimacy with Hubert; and Carlton strongly urged that the youth should be removed from the neighbourhood by force, if he persisted in his refusal to enter a monastery.

But to this Sir Hugh had his own private reasons for refusing his consent. Though he loved not Hubert Saville, he had learnt of late years to consider his existence as of inestimable value to himself; and however he might find it expedient to conduct himself towards him, he was resolved never to trust him to the tender mercies of Master Carlton.

Of all this he said not a word to the courtier, but proposed a plan of immediate action, which met his most cordial approbation; and when they parted near the dawn of day, it was with the warmest expressions of friendship and cordiality, though they internally wished each other at the bottom of the sea.

CHAPTER XII.

It is certain that Sir Hugh Collingwood took no repose during the remainder of that night, for he was seen by a shepherd leaving the dwelling of Father Ambrose before the sun had risen.

Neither were the eyes of Master Carlton closed in sleep. He was distracted by a thousand changing thoughts of the past and the future. The apparition of Marion in the wood, gleaming dimly and fearfully

between the flame and the smoke of the faggot fire, returned again and again with fearful distinctness, before his eyes, yet even less appalling than the horrible train of recollections it awakened in his mind. During transient feelings of remorse, when he remembered the horrible past, he half repented the ruthless plans he had laid for the destruction of Ellen's happiness—he half hesitated in his heartless design of blighting her whole existence, as he had once before seared and withered the heart, of another But his habits of fair and innocent being. evil were too strong for such feelings to be more than momentary, like the lightning that burns as it passes; and quickly remembering the vast property to which he should become heir by a marriage with his victim, he directed his mind with the most profound intensity, to the arrangement of the different means necessary for the accomplishment of this object.

Money—money—money—was the first thing necessary. He had advanced large

sums to Sir Hugh; he had recently been obliged to contribute considerably to a loan made by the king; and several lords and gentlemen to whom he had lent money on large interest, had suddenly fled from the Court to Brittany, to get rid of their debts by joining the party of the Earl of Richmond. He had many agents in his pay, whose demands could never be neglected without danger; and all he had hitherto expended might prove fruitless, could he not immediately procure a supply of ready money.

From Sir Hugh there was nothing immediately to be got; his lands could not be sold; delays attended his marriage with Ellen; Lady Isabel's jewels, and Lady Lady Isabel's hoarded savings, afforded the sole means of satisfying his rapacity. An undefined idea of obtaining possession of this treasure, by fraud, or force, had, for several months, been floating in his mind, though the narrative of Peggy, for the first time, placed the practicability of such a robbery, fully and clearly before him.

Master Carlton was not a coward, and he hesitated not from any personal fear, but because even his evil and avaricious heart, recoiled from so base a deed. Aware of the bad reputation of the men of Redesdale. who were generally considered as prompt for every lawless act, he had determined to engage the aid of Convers; but the manner in which the outlaw received his half confidence, shook his resolution. On later reflection he felt convinced, that this man's manner was too independent, for him to venture to place himself further in his power. and he decided, that when they again met, he would put some false interpretation on the words he had uttered with regard to the Yet he was still decided to get robbery. speedy possession of the plunder, fearful lest Sir Hugh might be beforehand with him, or that in the approaching confusion of the country, the moss-troopers or the Scots. excited by the current tales of the old lady's treasure, might seize it by force of arms.

He was deeply engrossed by such reflec-

tions, when the door of his chamber was cautiously unclosed, and his principal domestic made his appearance. He was a hard, thin featured man, approaching fifty, with a long, sharp nose and chin, and a perpetual smile upon his leathern lips, which nature however contradicted, by the sinister expression of his fox-like eyes, which glanced upwards from the corners, with a most malicious twinkle, and never looked an honest man directly in the face. Miles Forrest, had been in Carlton's service for ten years, but after the death of Edward the Fifth and his brother in the Tower, in 1483, with which event, later historians have connected his name; he was suddenly raised from a low and menial office, to be the personal attendant and confidant of the Secretary. He had at all times proved himself a cunning, as well as courageous servant, where anything was to be won. He had done Carlton service even in his youth, in return for which, the gentleman had saved him from a scaffold during the civil wars; and whenever Richard the Third had employed his Secretary in any of those infamous affairs which raised him to the throne, Forrest had been found an excellent agent.

"Good morrow, Master Carlton," he said as he entered, "I trust all has proved true; I told you about Marston Conyers, and he has the sense to accept service with so noble and generous a gentleman!"

"We have agreed for five hundred men, Forrest," was the reply. "His manners are somewhat rude and abrupt, but I count therefore the more on his fidelity."

"Perhaps you are right, sir," said the sycophant, "for you have a wonderful discrimination in these matters; but I trust, though my beard is somewhat smoother shorn, and my voice by nature less harsh, you have never had reason to doubt my sincerity."

"Never!" answered the Secretary, "but no two men are alike, nor can we judge of characters by rules; what is true of one is false of another! Nay, no man is at all times consistent—for example—though I believe you like a glass of good wine as well as any man within Temple Bar, yet you most unmercifully spoilt a whole butt of excellent Malmsey by thrusting therein the carcase of George Clarence."

"But, by St. Anthony, I had first taken the precaution to draw off a half a dozen flagons to drink to his happy passage to the next world."

"I doubt it not," said Carlton, "for to be plain with you, Miles, the habit of strong potations, was at one time gaining fearfully upon you; and you should never forget, that when a man has secrets in his heart, he should keep a strong padlock on his mouth. When too much enters, too much may come out."

"You are right—perfectly right, Sir," replied Forrest, "there was a time, when to drown care, I was on the point of marring my fortunes by the fool's sin of drinking, but thanks to your wise counsels, Master Carlton—I stopped in time, to save my brains, and

my secrets, and I have doubly reason to be grateful to my generous benefactor."

"In truth, I have had no cause to complain of you for some time past," said his master, keeping his eyes firmly fixed on his companion, whose flatteries, vile as he was, had become familiar and agreeable, for it is not unfrequently the case, that men who intrigue for their equals or superiors, are themselves the dupes of some low creature they despise.

"And never shall again," answered Miles, "I would rather make a vow that nothing stronger than water should ever again pass my lips, than run the risk of betraying the secrets of the master to whom I owe my life."

"This resolution gives me great pleasure," said Carlton, "for at this very moment I have an affair in hand, in which I have need of your aid, and where such infinite caution and circumspection will be necessary, that, remembering this old failing of yours, I have hesitated to take you into my confidence."

"Ha! Master Carlton! if there is money to be got, have no fears of me!"

"Yes, there is money to be got, and plenty! The profits will amount to many thousand royals. But before I disclose further, I must have your solemn oath of secresy and fidelity."

"If there be as much to be gained as you say," answered the domestic, "it is scarcely necessary. But I am ready to do as you please," and taking a crucifix from the wall, he gave the required oath. " By the mass, sir," he continued after he had performed this ceremony, "I am glad you have got some game on the wing; I know not how we should get over the time here, without the excitement of a little adventure! I should have been driven to the brandy bottle in spite of myself. But I am all curiosity to learn particulars. Are we to turn traitors, or are we only to hatch a false plot, and hang half a dozen northern gentlemen, to get possession of their forfeited estates."

"No, no, that trick is too stale," returned

the Secretary, "and too slow in being brought to bear. My plan is this! know Sir Hugh Collingwood has a mother. She is a confoundedly obstinate old woman, whom even the Knight cannot persuade to believe, her eldest son is dead, without children; so she keeps possession for him, of all the precious jewels and heir-looms of her family. For more than twenty years she has lived in mourning and sorrow, hoarding all the rents of her estates. Sir Hugh might starve, or die in a prison for debt. before she would advance him a farthing. have reason to believe all these treasures are kept in her house, indeed I have accurate information as to the spot where they are concealed, and I consider there will be no very heavy sin incurred, by putting this dead capital in circulation for the benefit of society."

"No, by our Lady!" cried Forrest, "the old woman will never know the want of it."

"That is what I think," said Carlton,

"and Sir Hugh is a confounded fool, that he has not taken possession of it long ago. But however, so much the better for us, for I give you my word of honour, Forrest, that to whatever sum it may amount, one third shall be yours, if we come off securely with our spoil."

- "Oh, Master Carlton you are too generous!" cried the wily Miles, "one fourth would have contented me, more especially as the sum total is so great. But when do you intend the attempt should be made?"
- "To-night, at latest! not a creature sleeps in the house save Lady Isabel and her maid; there is not a dwelling within a mile round, and were they to scream like eagles, the hills alone could hear them."
- "You know, you say, where the treasure lies?"
- "On the ground floor," was the reply; "and mark me, Forrest, you must find means to convey thither, dry wood and straw

enough to set fire to the house, and then no man will be the wiser."

"What! and burn the women in their beds? You are fond of burning it seems, Master Carlton!" exclaimed the ruffian, even his blood-thirsty nature recoiling from such a deed.

"The smoke will stifle them," returned his master, whose cheek, at the last words of his servant, had become suddenly as pale as death, and then changed as red as fire, whilst his flashing eye betrayed that he with ditficulty curbed his rage, to answer tranquilly.

"Yet, in case of surprise, it would be best to have a well armed man to help us, whilst another should keep watch without," answered Forrest, not appearing to notice his master's agitation, of which he well knew the cause. "The groom, Tom Reed, and Will Ainsley of Rothbury, may well be trusted," he added; "they have both done you good service ere now, and will neither ask questions, nor tell tales."

"It is true, Tom is a dull lout," said the courtier. "He knows nothing of the country, and will be ignorant whither we lead him. You have only to tell him to keep a strict watch and to strike down all comers whilst we are within — but Ainsley—"

"Is my own cousin and I will answer for his fidelity," was Forrest's reply.

"But there is a dog," said Master Carlton, "I saw the lazy old cur before the door this morning; it looks as if it slept in my Lady's chamber."

"That is bad," replied the servant, "were he left to prowl about on the outside of the house, at night, I would engage to silence him in two minutes; but within the walls, it is another matter; we must catch him by day-light, or be prepared to silence him and his mistress with the same dagger."

"There would be no harm in that either," was Carlton's caustic reply. "But I leave these matters to you."

- "You are right, sir—very right. These little things are more in my way, and be assured, they shall not be neglected. Twelve o'clock at night, shall I say? and combustibles—there must be some about the place—Dry heather, or straw, or somewhat to make the old lady's pot boil. I must see to all that, by day-light."
- "But take heed you excite no suspicions," returned the Secretary.
- "I come too far north, for that," answered Forrest, whilst an expression of delight shone from his twinkling eyes, at the prospect, of so speedily having an opportunity for exercising his faculties for deception and roguery.
- "I shall only request leave of absence till the evening, to make my arrangements."
- "The day is entirely at your disposition, only fail not to be here, an hour before midnight; and if you have an opportunity keep an eye on the movements of a youth who goes often to the Manor House; one Hubert

Saville, who dwells with the old priest, at the village."

- "Master Carlton you shall have reason to say to-morrow, that Miles Forrest is a cunning dog," was the answer; "but I will now descend to brush your doublet, that the louts in the household may have no suspicions, and then wish them farewell, as if I were going for a couple of days to make merry with my friends above Elsden."
- "And I, meanwhile, will try to take an hour's repose," said his master. "Give orders that I am not disturbed till after eight o'clock, and say I shall not ride before dinner."
- "All shall be done at your desire," answered the servant; "and let no further care disturb your rest, Master Carlton, for you have put a faithful dog on the scent, who will not fail to hunt down the game."
- "Is my breast-plate unpacked?" demanded the gentleman. "I shall have need of it under my doublet."

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"Your armour hangs all ready, in your closet," he replied.

"It is well, good Forrest! and now fare-well, but, mark me, forget not my advice about the wine flask," said the Secretary, as his domestic was about to leave the room. "That fellow would be worth his weight in gold, if he had never tasted brandy," was the thought that crossed his mind, as he threw himself on his bed to endeavour to take a short repose.

"A very likely thing indeed that I should every day put my neck in jeopardy for his cursed avarice and ambition, and forswear my own innocent pleasures, at his bidding," was on the other hand the first reflection of Forrest, as he descended the stairs. "When I had not a groat in the world, to bless myself, it was a time to be sober; but I have not been such an ass as to steep my hands in blood, to drink nothing but water all my life; and cunning as you think yourself, Master Carlton, I should be a confounded fool,

if I could not throw dust in your eyes, from time to time. Ah flattery—flattery—what a soothing unction thou art, that thou canst lull the sharpest wits, as sure as a doctor's potion. For my own sake, however, I must go to work prudently, this time at least, for the prize, it seems, is worth winning by a day's abstinence. It will pay for many a day's potations," and with this conviction, he forthwith began to prepare for the work he had in hand.

His mother, an old woman in the last stage of decrepitude, still lived in the village, and to her cottage his steps were first directed. It was a miserable place, with no light but what entered through the door and the holes in the thatched roof, whence the rain was dripping, with a monotonous, plashing noise, on the uneven earthen floor. Two narrow slits in the wall had been meant te serve as windows and chimney, but as the old woman's blood was chill, and eastern winds blew strongly from the coast, they were stuffed up with rags and straw, and

the smoke curling round the black rafters of the roof, escaped partly by the holes in the thatch, and partly by the door. When Miles Forrest entered, his mother

was sitting beside the fire, vacantly watching the blazing faggots. She was a thin, withered, toothless crone, whose grey locks were drawn back tightly under a linen kerchief, and whose garments were threadbare and She had once been an active housewife, but seventy years of toil and hard living, had weakened her mind, even more than her body, and since the day when her husband was slain before her door, by a party of Scottish foragers, she had pined away in sorrow, and poverty, till she now seemed just hovering between life and death. In truth, it seemed, as if her soul had already departed to the land of rest, and only re-visited her body at intervals, bringing with it, like a flash of light, the remembrance of the past. Her son, who from his childhood, had been, by his dissolate conduct, a source of trouble to his parents, had

long left her to her miserable lot, and a visit he paid her, on his return to the north, with Carlton, was the first she had seen, or heard of him, for many years.

She now looked up with a vacant stare, as he entered, and though the increased tremour of her head, proved he was recognized, she gave no sign of pleasure, and scarcely returned his salutation.

- "Do you not know me, mother?" he said.
- "Yes," she answered, "I know thee too well, thou herb of little grace! why have you not left me to die in peace?"
- "Because forsooth, I have a question to ask you, if you have still wit enough to answer me. What have you done with old Peter's clothes, since the Scots knocked out his brains?"

Barbara raised her head at the sound of her husband's name, and cast a searching glance at the speaker, as if she would fain understand his meaning.

"Aye, don't you hear me!" he cried,

"what have you done with the old man's clothes? was the question I asked."

"They are not sold," she returned, with a hoarse and bitter laugh. "No. not sold! they are all in the oak trunk, as safe as on his dying day, so thou need not expect any money!"

"And a pretty sum I should get if I did," returned the worthless fellow with a sneer. "No, no, thank the saints, I have no need of cash, or I should not come here, I promise you," and without saying more, he turned towards the trunk to which his mother had pointed, and with some difficulty, raised the lid on its rusty hinges.

"Miles! by the Holy Mother, what art thou doing?" cried the wretched widow, starting from her seat with a vivacity, of which she had before appeared incapable, when she beheld her worthless son take, one after another, the patched garments of her lost husband, from their hiding place, and cast them on the moist and dirty ground.

"Miles! Miles!" she cried, "I have

dusted and folded them every Sunday morning since he died, and is that a way to treat them, when he that wore them is in the grave?"

"Folded and dusted them!" he returned with a sneering laugh, "they were well worth the trouble certainly, and a goodly inheritance I have reaped; but no matter, they will serve my turn, worthless as they are, and to save you further anxiety, I will carry them with me at once."

"What, rob me of my good man's clothes, no, no, Miles, they can be nothing to thee, though when I look at them, I could almost think they had a soul! and I can talk to them for the hour together. No, no, thou wilt leave me them. Miles!"

"I tell you I have need of them," answered the unfeeling fellow, with the same cool indifference, as before, "there is money to buy you a new kirtle, worth ten of these old rags,"

"Keep thy money, I have no need of it," she replied, pushing aside the proffered coin.

"What can money buy for me in this weary world, now my good man hath departed. It cannot bring him out of the grave—but the clothes, I must and will have. I spun them myself, I wove them myself, and he wore them many, and many a happy day, till we grew old together."

"And they too it seems," rejoined her son, "but he has done with them now, at all events and I want them so you may bid them farewell, for this is the last you will ever see of them."

"Oh, Miles, Miles! art thou indeed my son!" she cried in an unearthly voice, as she grasped his arm with her withered hands. "Canst thou indeed, hear unmoved, the prayer of the mother that bore thee, and worse than a common robber, tear from her, the only things on earth to which her heart still clings. Lonely, poor, old and widowed, as as I am, hast thou the heart to take from me this poor comfort? must the weeks come and go, and I find the coffer ever empty. But fool, fool, who am I speaking to, he has no heart, he never loved—no, not even

when a child!" and the desolate creature sunk on her knees in the middle of the wretched hovel, and hiding her face with her withered hands, wept as she had not done for years.

Forrest in the meanwhile completed his work, and was about to depart, when as he passed near his mother, she suddenly ceased weeping, and seized hold of his mantle.

- "I pray thee at least leave me the shepherd's plaid," she said in an imploring voice, "he wore it on his wedding-day, and it is stained with his blood!"
- "Nonsense," he exclaimed trying to push by her, "I am weary of this folly. Get up I say! Whoever expected to hear such a confounded botheration about a bundle of old rags. Get up I tell you, and be quiet."
- "Yes I will get up," she answered, arising as she spoke, "but it shall be to utter a curse upon thy head! never from this hour will I count thee as a son of mine, and never will I henceforth name thy name, save to

curse the hour of thy birth, the breast that suckled thee, and all the remaining days of thy life, which thou hast devoted to wickedness and crime. Friends mayst thou have none, gold mayst thou never keep, and may the punishment thy guilt deserves, come in fulfilment of a mother's curse, dark and fearfully upon thee, ere I die; and when the hangman's cord is round thy neck, mayst thou plead for life, and plead in vain, as I have done to thee."

The withered form of the old woman trembled with passion, as she pronounced this fearful malediction on her only child. Even Forrest shuddered, but he made no reply. He cast one glance at the evil prophetess, as if he would gladly have crushed her to the earth, and then hurried away, to pursue an enterprise commenced under such evil auspices.

The purpose which Forrest had in view, in thus possessing himself of the wretched clothing of a northern peasant, was that of disguising himself in such a manner, that he might enter the house of Lady Isabel, and make the observations he deemed necesrary, without exciting suspicion. In order to do so, he passed directly from the cottage to a small fir copse, on the hill, about a mile off, where he speedily effected a change of apparel. He left his usual attire, rolled up in his mantle, in a hollow tree, when he emerged from the bushes, attired in his father's wretched garments, with straw bands round his legs instead of stockings, and a great oaken stick in his hand, Master Carlton himself, could scarely have recognized him.

With rapid steps he then hurried to the Manor House, which lay in the plain beneath. The old dog failed not to announce his arrival, with loud clamour, as he entered the court-yard, but a morsel of meat he threw to it, speedily quieted its rage, and he approached the house without further molestation.

The door of the Lady of the Manor was ever open to the poor; she never denied relief to the passing traveller, for she thought of her own lost son, who might perchance, in foreign lands, have need of aid, and she never allowed a beggar to petition in vain at her gate.

Old Hannah, her servant, was her almoner on these occasions, and as usual, Forrest was immediately admitted to the kitchen, and the good woman busied herself in preparing him a mess of porridge. Whilst she was thus employed, he had sufficient time to take an accurate survey of all the bolts and fastenings, likely to obstruct the midnight entrance of himself and his master. quick eye soon detected, that a small door opening from a buttery into the yard beyond, had fallen greatly into decay. Its hinges were rusty, and half loosened from the wall, and it was evident, it would be no difficult task, to force it inwards near the same place, was fuel in abundance, and fully satisfied by the result of his observations, he arose as soon as his meal was finished, and wished the old housekeeper farewell.

Observing that she stood upon the threshold and watched his movements, as he re-crossed the court, he was obliged to pass the gate, without making any effort to entice away the dog, although scenting the remainder of the food he carried in his pocket, it followed him to the outer path. Hannah, however, quickly called it back into the court.

Forrest no sooner saw her disappear, than he laid himself down in a ditch behind a wall, to await an opportunity of accomplishing his purpose. When after a quarter of an hour he returned to look up, the dog was lying half sleeping in the sunshine before the house door, the housekeeper was no longer to be seen, passing and repassing in the kitchen, not a living creature was stirring save the pigeons walking with pride about the court, picking up seeds between the stones of the old pavement. The dog gave a low growl, when Forrest again approached the gate, but the bait was ready in his hand, and the poor

animal recognizing a friend, ran wagging his tail towards him.

In another moment a noose was round his neck. It was drawn with no relenting hand; a struggle and a shudder, and its voice was silenced for ever.

Miles thrust the dead animal into his empty pack, and pursued his way, convinced that no human eye had witnessed the act. But he was mistaken, at least as far as regarded the commencement of his proceedings.

Marston Conyers had come to the Manor House that morning, to communicate to Lady Isabel the progress of an important affair, in which he had been employed by her, for some time. The outlaw, whilst sitting near a window of a small room on the second story, had seen all that passed. The appearance of Forrest as he entered, and the fact of his throwing food to the dog, had at once struck him as extraordinary, and though he said nothing, he kept a vigilant eye on him, as he departed. He saw him creep into

the ditch, and he was still lying there when old Hannah entered the room, declaring that if she had not seen the ghost of old Joe Forrest, she had certainly seen the ghost of his clothes, that she could swear to the patch on his right elbow, and the plaid which was stained with his blood.

She hoped nothing had happened to his widow, who since his death had stored up his clothes, as if they were a priest's embroidered garments.

- "Her son, who is in the service of Master Carlton, has come with him to the north, has he not?" demanded Conyers with apparent carelessness.
- "Ay, the shameless varlet," cried the old woman. "Though men say he has made a fortune, with all the black deeds he has done, he has never sent his father, or his mother the value of a groat to save them from starving. But my lady is ready to see you."
 - "I will go to her instantly," returned the vol. i.

moss-trooper. "I have business in hand, which makes me anxious to be off."

Nearly an hour passed, ere the interview of the outlaw and his hostess was at an end, and he could then discover no traces of Forrest. But this man's visit in disguise to the Manor House, combined with Master Carlton's mysterious proposition on the previous night, had excited suspicions in his mind, which made him resolve to postpone all other affairs, and to linger in the neighbourhood, during the remainder of the day, in hopes that chance might come in aid of vigilance, and assist him to make further discoveries.

It was the hour of dinner, when as he was sitting on the bench in front of the village inn, he saw Forrest approaching in his ordinary attire. At once his plan was formed.

Forrest, who had come thither for the sole purpose of hearing the gossip of the village, with regard to Lady Isabel's treasure, and to spread tales concerning a band of Scotch robbers, who had crossed the Tweed, and plundered several houses and farms, was greatly annoyed when he saw Conyers advancing to give him welcome, and yet more so, when the outlaw, out of professed gratitude for his help in making a favourable arrangement for service with Master Carlton, invited him to share his mid-day repast.

Nevertheless, the temptation of good cheer, at another man's expense was not to be resisted, and Forrest consoled himself, as he took his seat at the dinner table, by the reflection that he had already done all that was essentially necessary in his master's service.

"It is my turn now," he thought, "nevertheless I must be on my guard with the wine-cup."

But once commenced, it was a difficult matter for him to keep this resolution, and it was soon proved, that with a jovial companion like Conyers, who had his own ends in pushing the bottle, it was utterly impossible. As his faculties became less clear, the mosstrooper found means to mix yet stronger drinks with his wine, till by degrees, he brought him up exactly to that happy point of garrulous content, when the heart unlocks its most precious secrets, and the lips of the hypocrite, in spite of himself, pronounce the words of truth.

Then it was, that he succeeded in drawing from the intoxicated serving man, the whole particulars of Master Carlton's meditated attack on the Manor House—broken and confused—yet sufficiently clear, for one of his quick intellect fully to comprehend all that was to be dreaded and guarded against.

It was very much what he had suspected, and he was only surprised to find, that Sir Hugh had no share in the undertaking. He saw, therefore, that violence was the more to be dreaded, and his anxiety to frustrate the Secretary's infamous design was proportionally great.

The better to reflect on the steps neces-

sary to be taken in such an emergency, he allowed the drunkard, after his tale was told, to fall into a profound slumber, and then gliding from the Hostelry, he hurried in search of those, of whose assistance he had need, to accomplish his plans.

CHAPTER XIII.

When Hubert arose, on the morning after his interview with Ellen, it appeared as if his whole character was changed. The quiet and resolute perseverance, which had hitherto sustained him through his laborious and monotonous existence, was now at an end. The assurance of Ellen's love, had opened for him a future, such as he had never before dared to anticipate; dreams of happiness and honour came thick upon him,

and aroused all the slumbering faculties and energies of his nature. He felt that he had much to win, but that if Ellen's hand were to be the reward of his success, he had courage, and strength, and ardour, to enter without delay, heart and soul, into the wild struggle of life.

For two hours after sunrise he patiently worked to complete a manuscript, a small portion of the payment for which, was to be his own; he then descended to the breakfast table of Father Ambrose, resolved if the subject of his entering a monastery was again mentioned, to announce his intention of quitting his house without further delay.

He found the Vicar unusually grave. His servant had gone forth into the village, and they were alone in the cottage. Their humble meal was eaten in silence, but when Hubert, at its conclusion, arose to return to his chamber, the priest, with evident agitation, laid his hand on his arm, and said with a trembling voice, that he wished to speak with him on business of importance.

"Not the Monk's frock again, I trust," was the young man's reply.

"No," returned the Vicar, "we will leave that to another time, though I must now tell you some circumstances, which may probably make you at last admit, that there are persons living, who have a right to command your destiny."

"In my present position, I recognize none such!" was the youth's haughty reply.

"Hear me!" answered his host. "Your opinion may be greatly changed, before I finish my discourse. You probably remember, that in an imprudent moment, I betrayed the pleasure the arrival of Sir Hugh Collingwood gave me, as I trusted, no further obstacle would then prevent your entering the church. You questioned me sharply as to the right he had to direct your profession—you pressed hard for me to give you some information as to your birth, and parentage."

- "I remember!" said the youth, whose curiosity was now powerfully excited.
- "At that time," continued Father Ambrose, "I had no right to do so. My lips were sealed by a solemn oath of secrecy."
- "And now?" exclaimed Hubert with wild eagerness.
- "The bond is broken," was the reply.

 "I have full liberty to announce to you, that the man to whom you are indebted for your life, your education, and your support, is Sir Hugh Collingwood."
- "What do I hear?" cried the young man in a voice of horror, whilst pale as death, he grasped the arm of the priest. "Sir Hugh Collingwood, my patron?"
- "More than a patron—a father!" was the reply.

Hubert started back as if a shot had pierced his heart, as these fatal words fell on his ear. His whole frame shook with a fearful convulsion, and he must have fallen to the ground, had he not seized a projecting corner of the wall for support. "Father

of mercy! Ellen my sister!" were the only words that broke from his trembling lips, and sinking back on a seat, he covered his face with his hands, and sat for some minutes silent and motionless as a statue, lost in the whirlwind of terrible thoughts that rushed upon him.

The priest, cold and calm as was his nature, was himself appalled by a spectacle of mental agony, such as he had never before The tumult of unconstrained and youthful passion hath in its power, and its self-forgetfulness, a grandeur which awes and stills all feebler spirits! But the old man had no pity for the pangs he had excited, and after he had gazed for a few minutes with wonder on the agony of the youth, he continued, "Yes, Ellen Collingwood is your sister, and yet thou, sinner as thou art, hast dared to taint the maiden's virtuous ear with thy base tales of vile, incestuous passion. Thou hast lured her from her father's house, thou hast taught her to reject a rich and honorable suitor, that she might wed with thee, forsooth—a beggar—and her brother—her base-born brother!"

- "By the mass! this is not to be borne! and did not thy silver hair and holy garb protect thee, Father Ambrose, thou shouldst not live to repeat such insults," exclaimed the youth, starting from his seat with wildly flashing eyes, whilst cold drops of agony rolled from his brow.
- "Yet are my words, words of truth, and therefore they wound the more," returned the Vicar with a sneer, that wrought his tortured victim to distraction.
- "And if they be true!" he cried, "the blame is yours, not mine. Shame fall on you, who sold yourself as the tool of an unnatural father, who cast his own son, a nameless beggar upon the face of society, and robbed him of the common rights which every vagabond inherits from his birth. Have I not implored you, aye, a thousand times, to reveal to me the names of my parents, and yet, as if a spell lay in the

sound, you have ever denied my prayer. Thence all the crime, if such it be, of which

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you now accuse me; thence all the agony, that racks my burning brain: and you know not, you cannot know, what dark mischances may ensue. I must myself to Sir Hugh, I

must hear from his own lips, the confirmation of your tale, ere I believe it true."

"Sir Hugh will not consent to see you." " He wishes the whole said the priest. affair to remain secret, and even now had not allowed me to disclose the fact of your consanguinity, save for your wild presumption, in pretending to his daughter's love."

"What crime have I committed, that I am ever thus to be spurned, disowned, and crushed like a vile reptile, to the earth?" demanded the young man in a trembling voice, that belied the tranquillity he endeavoured to assume.

"It is a mother's crime for which you are made to pay," answered the Vicar.

" A mother's crime!" muttered Hubert in a tone of agony.

- "Aye," returned Father Ambrose, "have you yet to learn, a woman's weakness is her offspring's curse; that the child whose birth was unsanctified by wedlock, inherits none of those proud rights of which you talk so much? no name is his, no claim upon a father's love, or fostering care, no birth-right, and no honour."
- "And my mother, sir—tell me of my mother?" demanded the young man with a convulsive effort.
- "She died in bringing thee into the world; I never knew her, and thou never canst."
- "Just heaven! why was I born thus accursed," cried Hubert, wildly clasping his hands, "the child of sin, the offspring of base passions, a wretched thing whom even the felon's child may scorn, and set at nought! My mother too! Thou, who though I knew thee not, hast ever like an unseen angel hovered near, betwixt me and evil, must thy fair form be ravished from me? must I henceforth recoil with horror

from the vision, or see thee only clothed in shame and infamy, a vile, lost creature, whom the tongue blisters to name? and when all others can with pride give honor unto her, to whose maternal care their virtues all are owing, I, poor, neglected wretch, must tremble, lest men question me of her, who cursed me with existence. Which ever way I look, around me is despair! and he, the father who disowns me now, has been the cause of all this ruin! horror! horror! that a son must live to loathe his parents' names!" and in a paroxysm of agony, he flung himself on the ground, and resting his

The priest waited till the first burst of his despair had passed, and then softly approaching him, he laid his hand on his shoulder, and said, "Arise, Hubert! this is rebellion against heaven. Though the sins of the fathers, are, as thou well knowest, visited upon the children, to the third and fourth generation, yet by prayer, and penitence, large means are offered thee to ob-

face on his arms, wept violently.

literate the stain. Your father himself, has arranged with the Prior of Alnwick, for your reception into that sacred fraternity, and—"

"Let Sir Hugh himself go there, to expiate his sins, by penance and mortification, not I!" cried the youth starting at once on his feet, with a sudden change of feeling, that seemed to inspire his whole frame with noble energy. "His is the crime that hath need of repentance, pardon-not mine! and both you and he err greatly, if you think in making this confession of his villany, that I, a poor, weak, friendless youth, crushed by the weight of this fearful disclosure, at a moment when it destroys the first bright hopes of love which stood like angels at the threshold of existence, you are both bitterly deceived, if you believe, that in my loneliness and my desolation, I shall fling myself into the arms of the church, and thus remove for ever a shame, and a reproach from the path of the proud knight who dares not call me son.

No, sir, whatever my parents may have sought to make me, such feeble pusillanimity is an alien to my heart. Let others shun the light who fear its rays."

"You may repent this pride, and haughty insolence, when all too late!" replied the Vicar, who could neither understand, nor appreciate, the noble and honest feelings of his pupil.

"No, Father Ambrose, I never can repent it," he returned with earnest rapidity, "I have long felt a cloister is no place for me, and the vile disclosures of to-day, instead of driving me thither, have taught me, that on the battle field, the stain upon my birth must be washed out. There only can I win honour, and I feel that there heaven will prove propitious to my deeds, until there comes a day, when he who now disowns me as a son, would hear with pride that I had acknowledged him as a father! But that I will never do, once spurned, the chains of nature that united us, are burst for ever. Oh would to heaven that were possible!" he

cried, suddenly arrested in the wild outburst of his pride, by the remembrance of her, whom he was no more to dare to love. "No, Ellen, no, whate'er the ties of blood, my sister thou canst never be!" he murmured, and with hurried steps, he paced the room in silent agony, lost to all present in the wild confusion of his changing thoughts.

The priest looked at him meanwhile, with wonder; he could scarcely believe it possible, that the haughty and energetic youth before him, was the silent student, who for years had obeyed his slightest command with respect and alacrity. He felt little doubt that all further remonstrance with him would be vain; yet he made another attempt to bend him to the wishes of Sir Hugh, but the young man was inexorable.

Irritated beyond the bounds of patience by this continued persecution, when the agony of his own thoughts was already past endurance, he at length forgot the respect due to Father Ambrose's sacred character, and replied with words of scorn and contempt impossible for the Vicar to hear without resenting, and forgetting all the advantages resulting from the continued favor of Sir Hugh, he was about to command the youth to quit his house instantly, when Hubert abruptly announced his own intention to depart, and hastily left the apartment, in search of the few articles belonging to him.

"Father Ambrose!" he said addressing the priest, with proud tranquillity, when he re-appeared with his little packet under his arm, "perhaps you think I make an evil return for all the care I have received for years under your roof; but you must remember the fearful causes of irritation you have given me within the last hour: you must make allowance for the violence of one, whose heart and tenderest feelings have been tortured to the very verge of madness. have said ought in the heat of passion, which hath wounded, or offended you, I pray you to forget and pardon it. My scorn and my indignation are against others, not against you. For your care and instruction I thank you, and I trust the day may yet arrive when you need not blush to remember, that I was once your pupil. Believe me, I would fain take your blessing with me, and the assurance of your pardon."

The priest, whose mild character was incapable of long resentment, could not refuse this appeal, and he was inwardly contented, when he saw Hubert Saville soon afterwards proceed at a rapid pace down the garden, to feel, that if they had parted for the last time, on this side the grave, they had, at least, parted in peace.

The mind of the young man was far less tranquil, as he hurried towards the Manor House, and the recollection of all that had passed the day before, the thought of the disclosure of his love for Ellen, he had intended to make to Lady Isabel, and the fearful story he had now to relate, thronged upon his mind. A dim feeling of apprehension likewise oppressed him, lest, as the son of Sir Hugh, the affection of his patroness

might be withdrawn from him, and the idea that he must acknowledge himself to her, whom he honored as a mother, to be the illegitimate child of the knight, crushed down his spirit with a heavy load of care. All the pride which had sustained him in the presence of Father Ambrose, gave way, and overwhelmed by the humiliating sense of his real position, and of the agony which awaited the innocent object of his love, he felt incapable of supporting an interview with the lady of the Manor, till his mind became more calm.

At mid-day he had promised to visit her, and till mid-day, he determined to delay the terrible disclosure he had to make. He sat down by the waters of the stream where Ellen had first led him to her grandmother's side, distracted by feelings of despair, such as the young alone can know. The mind can better appreciate in later years, the flitting character of all earthly things, and dulled by frequent trials, and the consciousness of the proximity of the grave, patiently sus-

tains at the dark close of life, those keen wounds, which to the ardour of youth, appear an inevitable source of endless misery.

But as the feelings of youth are more acute, so are they less lasting than those of age, and when mid-day approached, the honest pride of Hubert had again resumed its dominion, and resolved, that happen what might, he would maintain the strife against fortune with fortitude, his apprehensions fled before the consciousness of rectitude, and a reliance on the protection of a just Providence.

As he passed along by the side of the rivulet, he suddenly perceived the body of a dog thrown up on a slanting rock by the current. Such a simple circumstance would have failed to arrest his attention, had he not instantly remarked, that the dead animal bore a striking resemblance to the old watch dog at the Manor House. When he had drawn the body to the bank, he no longer doubted that it was the faithful creature who, for the last ten years, had given him

joyful welcome to Lady Isabel's abode; and he felt, as if fate had indeed conspired to rob him of all he had ever held dear, when even this dumb companion of his childhood, was cast a corpse at his feet. His astonishment was great, when he saw the cord which Forrest had twisted round its neck, and immediately suspecting evil, he took the body in his arms, and anxiously renewed his way.

Loud were the exclamations of the house-keeper, when she saw her dead favourite, and she at once declared that the beggar whom she believed to be Miles Forrest, had done the deed. She confessed that she had serious fears some evil scheme was in agitation, though she had not dared, she said, to inform her lady of the loss of the dog, so great had been her agitation since her interview with Master Conyers, who had formerly served with her lost son in the civil wars. She begged Hubert likewise to be silent on the subject, when he proceeded to the lady's parlour.

He found Lady Isabel sitting, as she ever was

at that hour, with the last letter she received from her son Reginald, lying open on the table before her. Something therein written evidently influenced her mind, when, without returning Hubert's salutation, she fixed her searching eyes upon his face.

"By the blessing of heaven," she murmured, "when next we meet, I trust to place my son in the arms of my beloved mother -and should I fall in this bloody war, my wife will bring her babe to thee for protec-Written at Hexham. A. D. 1463. And yet I wait for them, though two and twenty years have passed. It is strangeno tidings if he lives—and if he died neither the widow, nor the orphan have come to tell the tale! It was thus he looked, when last we parted in tears," she continued still gazing on her visiter, "so pale-so sad -and thus, in his son, would now the fresh image of his youth have been arrived, to cheer the lonely winter of my age. But these are dreams, good Hubert! could love thee more, wert thou indeed the offspring of my son, and spite of such dark thoughts, which will at times return, it soothes my weary spirit to believe, I hold a mother's place in thy heart."

"More, far more," cried the young man pressing the delicate, but withered hand of the lady in both his, as he sunk on the ground at her feet. "If reverence, honour, and obedience, are proofs of love, all these I bring you."

"I believe you," she returned, "but these are dull themes, for one whose ardent soul, would rather hear of marching and combats. I have spoken with Conyers, and he has undertaken to provide you with arms, and all things fitting for a young esquire to carry to the wars."

"Ha, lady, yet you well know I have no means of repaying such an expence," cried Hubert springing on his feet at this unexpected information.

"On my credit will all be done," answered the lady, "and thou shall pay me back with valorous deeds, and make the people busy with thy fame. New wars are nigh, and thou will have speedy occasion to try thy fortune on the battle field. portunity must not be lost—the gates of honour shall be opened to thee-and from henceforth, it will be thy fault alone, if thou miss the pathway thither. I will give thee letters to men of rank and power, launched on the wild sea of politics, with such protection, a youth with half thy talents, could not fail to win a proud reward if honesty be made his sure and constant guide. But trust me, Hubert, I have no fears that the easy vices which beset the houses of the great, will have any influence on thy noble and virtuous character. morrow thou must leave the Vicarage, and join Conyers here, when, may heaven prove more propitious to thee, than to him, on whom I last bestowed my blessing."

"Ah, Lady Isabel," replied the young man, "such kindness far surpasses all my wildest wishes; yet I fear, when you have heard all I have come hither to impart, lest you may find reason to withdraw your proffered aid."

- "Hubert, you are pale—you tremble—has any evil befallen you? have you drawn your sword upon that villain Carlton?" were her agitated exclamations.
- "No, Madam! the breach of my word is a disgrace I have not yet incurred!"
- "My son, be brief and true. Hast thou done aught to merit shame. If thou hast erred, fear not to make confession unto me; there may be yet time; my advice, or my gold may save thee from deeper evil."
- "Lady, you wring my heart," was his reply. "Yes, shame has come upon me, but by no deed of mine, and in such shape, that neither gold, nor human wisdom, can obliterate the stigma. It is my birthright and sole inheritance!"
- "What do your words imply? Hath Father Ambrose at length disclosed aught of your history?"

- "Too much!" was Hubert's brief and sad reply.
 - "The secret of your parentage?"
- "Yes, all is told, and I declared, past all dispute, the child of infamy."
 - "I will not credit it."
- "I cannot doubt the tale; and I, who from my childhood, have ever delighted to form fair dreams of my unknown mother, must henceforth regard her only as a lost, degraded creature."
- "And your father?" eagerly demanded his anxious listener.
- "Ah, lady! I tremble to pronounce a name, which, when once heard, may rob me of your precious love."
- "Hubert!" said Lady Isabel solemnly, "I have loved you for yourself alone, and not for others. Speak without fear."
- "Then, if it must be told, my father is your son!"
- "Sir Hugh! my son! oh, say my son, but not Sir Hugh, and then, with what joy, will

I believe the tale!" she cried, with fearful energy.

"Father Ambrose has declared the knight to be my father, though my mother never was his wife," was Hubert's answer.

"And wherefore have they concealed all this so long, and wherefore now, when no one suspected the fact, should Sir Hugh permit his long past sins to be revealed?" she demanded.

"Ah, lady, there lies the sharpest sting," returned the young man with confusion, "but to you, however painful, I must confess all my folly and presumption. You well know, how Ellen Collingwood and I have been companions from infancy; but you have not known, how love grew strong between us; nay, we even knew it not ourselves, till absence taught us the nature of our feelings. Here, in my solitude, it was no marvel, that my thoughts ever dwelt on her fair image, but she, even in the precints of a court, was not less true. She forgot me not—she re-

turned unchanged, and our affection is no more unspoken. We have met, as we believed in secret, to talk of the past and the future; but the spies of Sir Hugh have tracked our steps, he has learnt our love, and horror struck, it seems, by the danger to which his concealment of my birth had exposed us, he has torn aside the veil of mystery to save us from utter ruin."

"Horrible! most horrible," murmured the lady, "and it is thus, that these cold and worldly-hearted men, can crush the budding hopes of two young, confiding hearts—can tear away the flowers that never bloom again; it is thus they can ruthlessly dry up the springs of happiness, and leave no drop of joy to cheer the lonely wanderer on life's sterile path. Hubert, I dare be sworn, this tale is false, as those who invented it. It is a mere invention to divide you from Ellen!"

"I dare not think so!" was the youth's reply. "And yet, though I have been too presumptuous to lift my thoughts so high,

so high, the punishment is greater than my crime. I loved her in my ignorance."

"Talk not of presumption! that word is misapplied," cried Lady Isabel, with that wild and passionate energy, which gave rise to the common idea of her insanity. "if fault there be, I only am to blame. you I could be so blind as not to foresee, that love must be the consequence of the continual intercourse of two creatures bright and gifted as you and Ellen? I knew it, Hubert, and that it should be so, was my heart's warmest desire. I marked your childish attachment, day by day gaining new strength, till love at length knew his own power, and over both your souls usurped the mastery. This was my work, and a work I Heaven pardon me, if I have gloried in. wrought you woe, instead of joy; but I knew that you had a noble and a gentle heart, such as alone can make wedlock happy; and though you were poor, yet I had gold enough, and Ellen hath wealth her father cannot rob

her of. I fondly thought, I thus secured the happiness of both, by encouraging your love; and more than all, your resemblance to my lost son, has, from your childhood, been so marvellous, that, united with the mystery of your birth, it awakened strange dreams in my heart, and made me love thee, with a visionary hope."

"And now, when this resemblance to your family is accounted for in another manner," said Hubert with a trembling voice, "dare I hope, that your affection will not be withdrawn? dare I hope, that though I must henceforth hold it criminal to love, where most I worship, that you will not cast me off with scorn, now you know the story of my shame."

"Fear not, thy sorrow makes thee dearer to my heart, and if thou be the offspring of Sir Hugh, I shall be proud to teach him his duty towards the child he hath neglected."

"And still refuses to acknowledge!" rejoined Hubert. "He denies me an interview,

he withdraws from me all aid and support, and wishes the very fact of my existence to be forgotten."

"That shall never be!" cried Lady Isabel with proud decision. "Whatever thy birth, I charge myself henceforward with thy fortunes. Sir Hugh shall have reason to repent the day, when he spurned thee. Mark me. Hubert—I wish not to excite false hopes in thy mind, but there is, in the conduct of my son, much that excites suspicion in my mind, of falsehood and deceit; and I vow, by the Holy Mother, I will never rest satisfied till I have explored this affair to the foundation. Sir Hugh is not to be trusted. For gold, and the sensual pleasures gold can buy, he would sell wife, child, mother, nay, even his hopes of heaven. From him I can learn nothing further; but though I sit here in my lonely chamber, far from the busy world, yet I have money, and money is power! The House of York will, I hope, ere long, lose the ascendancy; then shall I have friends and agents at command; and by the saints I swear, if

it prove that Reginald, my son, or his child, have been foully dealt with, their wrongs shall be avenged, even though Sir Hugh himself be the criminal. But patience—patience—thou hast one friend at least, and she will ne'er desert thee. Back to that priest thou never more shalt go."

- "I have already wished him farewell," returned Hubert sadly. "One painful duty alone remains for me to perform, ere I depart. I must see Ellen—I must tell her the fatal truth, which henceforth places a gulf between us."
- "Her father hath forbidden her to come hither alone," said the lady, "where do you expect to meet her?"
 - "Near the old mill," returned the youth.
- "Conyers would gladly speak with you about the preparations for your journey. He is often at the ruin, and it would be well for you to go thither, to inquire for him without further delay. But remember, whatever he may propose, I expect you to pass

two nights at least, under my roof, ere we part perhaps for ever."

"I have not words to thank you," was Hubert's reply, "but I trust a time may yet arrive, when I shall have other means to prove my gratitude. As soon as my sad parting with Ellen is past, I will return; but let Hannah be on her guard, not to unbar the door till she hears my voice. Perhaps you are aware there has been a stranger here this morning, whose manner excites suspicion: and I am sorry to add, Lady Isabel, there are reports of your wealth in circulation, which render the utmost caution necessary, in a neighbourhood so infested by roving Scots and freebooters."

"Let them come; they will find they are mistaken, that is all," answered the courageous woman. "To-night and to-morrow night at least, I shall have a brave young guard beneath my roof."

"And arms?"

"There is a rusty sword hangs above the kitchen chimney, and an old axe in the hall,

and these are arms enough, I warrant, for all the robbers we shall see here."

Hubert shook his head. His promise to the house-keeper compelled him to be silent as to the fate of the dog, but resolving at all hazards to return at an early hour, he wished the lady farewell, and proceeded at a rapid pace towards the mill.

CHAPTER XIV.

Although it was the month of May, and the sun was going down bright and cloudless towards its setting, there was a keen east wind blowing from the sea, and patches of snow were still to be seen upon the highest parts of the Cheviot hills. The buds on the beech and ash trees had not yet burst into leaf, but the yellow broom was gay upon the banks, the primroses began to glisten like stars amongst the moss and weeds of the

woods, and the blue hyacinth, raised its purple bell from its dark leaves, near the margin of the stream. The lark had warbled in the sky the whole day long, and a solitary blackbird was singing like a spirit on the russet branches of an old oak tree, as Hubert descended the narrow path leading to the river, which went rippling over the rocks and pebbles with many a musical fall.

There was nothing grand, nothing imposing in the scene, but the calm beauty of the peaceful solitude had long made it one of his favorite resorts; and as he once more gazed upon its shadows, and its sunshine, the whole of his past feelings, the hopes never again to be indulged, the visions of happiness never to be fulfilled, came with overwhelming agony before him. Every rock, every tree, as if instinct with life, revived some long forgotten image in his mind, and now, when he beheld them probably for the last time, he felt with more reality than he had yet done, that the whole tenour of his

life was changed for ever—that banished from the fields of his youth, even the thoughts of early days must be forgotten; and divided from all he loved, the future would be to him a desert, where he might fight and conquer it was true, but where vain honours and a solitary grave, were the sole objects visible upon the dreary horizon. But remembering his vow of fortitude, he brushed the tears from his eyes as he approached the miller's abode.

Much to his disappointment he found the door closed and bolted, but trusting that either Andrew, or Master Conyers, would, ere long, make their appearance, he seated himself on the bench before the door, to wait as long as his appointment with Ellen permitted him to tarry.

More than an hour passed, and all remained as solitary as before, yet he fancied several times that he heard the sound of footsteps in the mill, but all the shattered windows were so closed up, that he could no

where make an entrance, and convinced at length, that the building was empty, he returned to his seat.

Ere long, however, his astonishment was great to hear a door close in the miller's dwelling, and then a female voice sang, low and sweet, a verse of a border ballad. Again all was still as the grave, till a few minutes afterwards the door near him was cautiously opened, and almost close at his side, he beheld Marion, in her male attire.

Her beauty was even more remarkable in that full light, than in the gloomy dwelling, as he had before seen her; yet her countenance was yet sadder than before, and tears glittered on her long, black eye-lashes. She carried a pitcher in her hand, as if it was her intention to bring water from the stream, but she had no sooner recognised Hubert, than she paused and turned towards him.

"Master Saville," she said with a sweet and modest grace, "if you are waiting for Master Conyers, you are spending your time in vain. He sent a boy here from the village soon after noon, to say that Andrew, the miller, should go to the Manor house to prevent your coming hither, and to tell Lady Isabel she should hear more before night, as for the present he is detained by urgent business."

"I thank you for your tidings, and would fain know by what name I am to remember so fair a messenger," returned Hubert raising his bonnet, as with unconcealed admiration and wonder, he gazed on the beautiful being before him.

"You have heard me called Marion, so let that henceforth be my name to you; though," she added smiling, "others, when I wear this garb, give me the name of Joscelin."

"And thou art the daughter of Master Convers?"

"In love and duty! but enough of myself; there is no time to lose. I must fill my pitcher and begone."

"That is my duty," said the youth following her to the brink of the stream, and gently taking the jug from her hand, he stepped over the rocks to the deep water, and quickly filled it to the brim.

She thanked him simply, as he placed it again in her hands, and then wishing him good evening, she returned towards the cottage. Hubert gazed after her, with even greater wonder and curiosity than before, but no sooner had she disappeared, than fearful thoughts banished her image from his mind.

With his arms crossed upon his breast, he stood forgetful of all around, when he was startled by hearing his own name softly pronounced, and looking up, he beheld Ellen herself, standing on the brink of a rocky path above him. The wind blew back the dark woollen scarf she had thrown over her lace hood and close gown of purple silk, fully displaying her fair face, and form, as, beaming with joy, she waved her hand for Hubert to join her.

"I am on my way to the mill," she said

gaily, "but we need go no further now, so let us sit down upon this mossy bank."

"And think of other times, when we were children here together," said the young man with a deep sigh.

"My present happiness is too great," she replied, "for me to remember such days. But, Hubert, you are sad! you tremble! have you heard any evil news?"

"Most fatal news!" he returned in trem-

bling accents. "But let me still look on you awhile, with that bright smile upon your face; let me feel, even though it be for the last time, that we have once been happy together, let me gaze on you with my whole soul, as I must never gaze again, ere I pronounce the fearful words that must henceforth divide us for ever and for ever!"

"Hubert, what wild and harrowing thoughts distract you! your hand is cold in mine—tears fill your eyes—oh, Holy Mother, what new misfortune hath befallen us!" she exclaimed as she gazed with terror on his changing countenance.

Hubert clasped her wildly in his arms, and pressed repeated kisses on her lips ere he cried, "Yes, for the last time it must be thus, even though thou art my sister!"

- "Thy sister, Hubert! dost thou rave?" exclaimed the girl wildly starting from his bosom. "Thy sister! what a terrible thought even to enter thy mind."
- "Yes, Ellen, thou art right," he returned, "yet that thought is dread reality. Thy father is my father."
- "How learnt you such a tale?" she cried in distracted accents, and her hands, which were still pressed in Hubert's, became as cold as death, whilst all color, all brightness passed away from her young, fair face. Breathlessly she leant forwards towards him, and her very life seemed to depend upon his words as he replied in an almost inaudible voice, "Sir Hugh having discovered our love, himself gave authority to Father Ambrose to disclose to me the fatal secret."
 - "Dreadful!" was the sole exclamation of

the unfortunate girl, ere she sunk back overpowered on the bank. Yet, still she held the hand of Hubert in her's, still she leaned her drooping head against his side, and though her eyes were closed, large drops rolled from time to time over her pale cheeks, and betrayed the agony of her heart. Thus they remained for a brief space, in profound silence; both overwhelmed by the consciousness of their fearful position. Ellen was the first to speak.

"Hubert, my brother," she murmured looking up with mingled despair and affection in his eyes. "Yet I can love him still—as a sister love him, even to the grave!" and her tears fell thick and fast.

"Oh, would to heaven that I had heard this tale ere thy return," he said, "thou hadst been spared much agony."

"Oh, no! no!" she cried. "It is better thus, for I have at least had the joy of knowing how much you loved me—one ray to light my future gloomy years. Ah, Hubert, we are luckless both! so young—and yet

so blighted," and she pressed his hand again and again to her lips. "Knows Lady Isabel of this?" she at length enquired.

- "I have told her all—and oh, Ellen, now when our hopes are all destroyed, I almost grieve to say, she would have blessed our union. She had long marked our love."
- "This makes our new misfortune deeper still!" she replied.
- "Yet, dearest Ellen, perchance therein lieth salvation for us both!"
- "What can you mean?" demanded the girl eagerly.
- "That Lady Isabel doubts the truth of our consanguinity."
- "Oh, blessed Virgin! what a ray of light!" she cried starting from the ground and clasping her hands together. "She thinks this tale may be an invention of Carlton and my father to divide us?"
- "Even so!" returned Hubert, "but yet I cannot join in her suspicions. Father Ambrose is an honest man, and would not lend himself to be their tool."

- "What says Lady Isabel?"
- "She replies with hints of dark intrigues to which she only half gives utterance."
- "And, alas, Hubert, it would be crime in us to build up sinful hopes, on the wild dreams of her excited mind."

"And it is thus, we both should think!" returned the young man; "and yet I cannot patiently despair, and doom myself to a dark certainty of endless shame and sorrow. I must have hope! it is like the air to life; exclude it from my soul, and I should

quickly perish. An ignominious birth, an infamous mother, and a father, whom, though your parent, I needs must scorn, if such are my only portion, it were better at once to lay down the burthen of existence. But

though wild, and perchance groundless hopes of a brighter future, flash over my brain, it is yet a fearful certainty, Ellen, that we must part—part perchance for ever!"

"No, no, Hubert! that need not, must not be!" she cried. "When our young feelings are subdued by absence, and the consciousness of the natural ties that unite us
—we yet may meet. Brother and sister—
it is a tender bond, sacred and pure, and a
time may come, when its sinless love may
prove a solace to our unimpassioned hearts.
Till then—amidst the trials that await thee
—remember thou hast, at least, a sister, who,
though far from thee, will ever deeply
sympathise in all thy sorrows and thy joys."

"And thou wilt not forget me, Ellen?" demanded Hubert with an emotion that almost robbed him of the power of words. "You will not, in despair, consent to all your father's wishes, and yield your hand to Carlton."

"Oh, wound me not, by such suspicions!" she exclaimed. "Think you my love for thee was of such feeble growth, or I so fickle, and so light of heart, that a few words can scatter it, like a mist of the morning. Though brighter hopes are past, thou, as a brother, shalt still hold the first place in my heart, and no power on earth shall ever force

me to become the wife of that detestable Carlton—nor of any other man," she softly added, and she rested her head on Hubert's hands, which she still held clasped in hers, and wept. "You will promise me in return," she said, at length, looking up at her lover with feelings no language could express, "that no mortification, or disappointment, shall ever induce you to enter a monastery?"

"I have already forsworn the church," he replied, "and in two days, I leave the neighbourhood with Marston Conyers, to seek my fortune as a soldier. A sad task, Ellen, when the heart has no part in the struggle; and I tremble when I think to what persecution you may be exposed, after my departure. But let me advise you, in every emergency to place implicit confidence in Lady Isabel. Though her imagination may be excited with regard to her lost son, her judgment on all other points is strong and clear, and she holds the interested and unprincipled schemes of Carlton in abhorrence."

"And you will write to her, will you not?
—and I shall hear of you sometimes, from her," rejoined Ellen; but ere he could reply to her question, they were surprised to hear footsteps approaching from the mill.

It was now so dusk, that no figure could be seen through the trees, at more than a few paces distance, and in hopes of escaping observation, they remained some minutes silent. During this pause, they distinctly heard the voices of two persons in discourse, and then the woods echoed to the name of Hubert Saville, repeated in the powerful voice of the moss-trooper.

"Master Conyers!" replied Hubert, in the same tone; and in a brief space, the outlaw stood beside them accompanied by Marion, who hung a few paces behind.

"The saints be thanked, I have found you," cried Conyers, the moment he was certain to whom he spoke, "there is not a moment to be lost, and you must hurry back to the Manor House without delay. Who have you with you, here? Ha! the fair you. I.

daughter of Sir Hugh Collingwood. My young lady, you must either go with us, with all speed, or return to the Tower, whither my page will keep you company."

"What means all this?" demanded Hubert, in amazement.

"This is neither a time nor place for explanations," answered Conyers. "Wish your companion farewell, and follow me, without question. You will repent it to your dying day if you do not."

"Go, Hubert, go—I implore you," cried Ellen. "If Lady Isabel summoned you, her commands must not be disputed for an instant."

"And leave you here alone in this solitude, at such an hour?" he rejoined. "It is impossible!"

"Have I not said, my page shall accompany her," demanded Conyers, impatiently.

"It is better thus," murmured the girl.
"May the saints guard you, Hubert, till we meet again!" and whilst the outlaw turned away to give his parting directions to Marion,

her lover pressed her with passionate despair to his heart, and one long kiss was his unuttered farewell.

"Heaven keep and protect thee!" he exclaimed, when yielding at length to the repeated instances of Convers, he placed her half lifeless on the mossy bank, and recommending her, in broken accents, to the care of Marion, hurried, in a state bordering on distraction, after the outlaw.

"It was lucky Marion saw you at the mill, or I should not have known where to seek you," said Conyers, after they had proceeded a short distance in silence.

"What is the meaning of this urgent haste and secrecy?" demanded Hubert, in reply.

"I trust no evil has befallen Lady Isabel?"

"Not yet," returned his companion, "but I feared to tell you what I dread may arrive, in the presence of Mistress Collingwood, for perchance her father hath a share in it. But to be brief-the Manor House is to be attacked to-night by robbers, who are in pursuit of the lady's gold. That no man may be the wiser, they design to set fire to the building, when their plunder is safe, and leave its inhabitants to perish in the flames."

- "You appal me! can such monsters live?" cried the young man.
- "Ay, they live, and moreover call themselves of gentle blood."
- "Can they not be arrested ere the deed be perpetrated?"
- "Impossible!" answered Conyers, "I should only be laughed to scorn, if I accused them, and probably condemned to suffer the punishment they merit. Master Carlton is the principal in this plot—Master Carlton, the King's secretary!—what think you of that? and for ought I know, Sir Hugh may intend to share the plunder."
- "What then is to be done?" demanded Hubert, eagerly.
- "The lady must be warned, the house put in a state of defence, and you and I will give the courtier and his minions a warmer reception than they expect. To make all

things sure, they have even stolen the dog this morning from the door."

- "I found its body in the stream, and had fears it boded evil," answered the youth. "Have you learned how many are to be engaged in the attack?"
- "Carlton and two other cowardly rascals; but I trust that you and I shall be more than a match for them! especially as they expect no resistance. It would have been well to have another stout fellow with us, but I know none in this neighbourhood, so we must do our best. I only fear thou hast not had much practice with the sword or axe, Master Hubert."
- "I have never missed the sports on the village green; and Andrew has taken care I should know something of the use of the sword," was the young man's answer.
- "Ay, ay, the miller was a valiant soldier in his time," returned the outlaw, "so I warrant thou cans't fight gallantly in case of need. I have arms under my mantle to furnish us both, and heaven will aid us, for

we shall fight in a good cause. But here we are at the Manor House, and in good time too, for lights are still stirring in the upper story."

Nevertheless, Master Conyers thundered long and loud, with his axe, against the great oaken door in front of the building ere old Hannah poked her head from her chamber window, and demanded the cause of this disturbance. The voice of Hubert reassured her, and with many expressions of joy she hastened to give him and his companion admission, as speedily as possible.

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